

The New Criterion

March 2005

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

Notes & Comments, 1

Teddy Roosevelt's manliness *by Harvey Mansfield*, 4

John Betjeman's "whim of iron" *by Brooke Allen*, 10

Rubens at the Metropolitan *by Karen Wilkin*, 19

Melville & Kleist *by Martin Greenberg*, 24

New poems *by Glyn Maxwell*, 33

London journal: The irresistible rise of Trevor who? *by John Gross*, 38;

Theater *by Mark Steyn*, 41; **Art** *by James Panero & Peter Campion*, 46;

Music *by Jay Nordlinger*, 50; **The media** *by James Bowman*, 55

Books: *Olivier Todd Malraux: a life reviewed by David Pryce-Jones*, 60; *Gertrude*

Himmelfarb The roads to modernity: the British, French, and American

Enlightenments *reviewed by Keith Windschuttle*, 64; *Deepak Lal* In praise of

empires *reviewed by Andrew Roberts*, 68; *Norman Sherry* The life of Graham

Greene, volume three: 1955–1991 *reviewed by Jeffrey Meyers*, 71; *Robert Grant*

Imagining the real *reviewed by Noel Malcolm*, 74; **Shorter notices**, 75;

Notebook: Pundits & panjandrum *by Anthony Daniels*, 77

Volume 23, Number 7, \$7.75 / £5



Paul Resika

Paintings

Ronald Weintraub

Paintings

March 1 to March 26

CATALOGUES AVAILABLE

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries

20 East 79 Street New York 10021 Tel (212) 879-6606

Monday–Saturday 9:30 to 5:30

JOHN WALKER
COLLAGE



FEBRUARY 3 – MARCH 19, 2005
CATALOGUE WITH ESSAY BY DORE ASHTON

KNOEDLER & COMPANY

— ESTABLISHED 1846 —

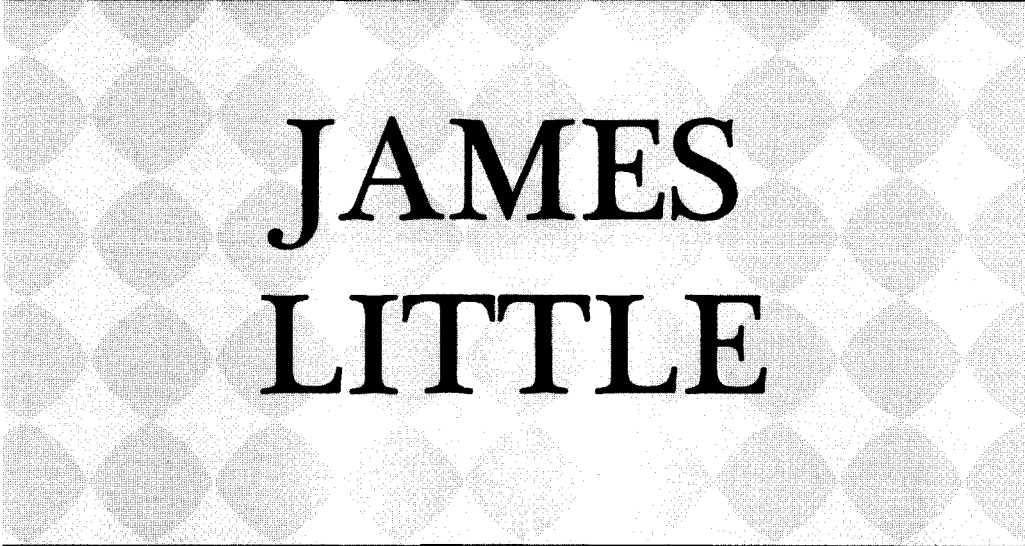
19 EAST 70 STREET NEW YORK NEW YORK 10021

TEL 212 794-0550 FAX 212 772-6932

WWW.KNOEDLERGALLERY.COM

THORNTON WILLIS

RAISING THE BAR



JAMES LITTLE

March 19 - April 25
Opening Sat. March 19th 6-9

319 Bedford Ave. Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Fax/Tel: 718.486.8180

hrs. 12-6pm, Friday - Monday

The New Criterion *March 2005*

Editor & Publisher *Hilton Kramer*

Managing Editor *Roger Kimball*

Associate Editor *James Panero*

Assistant Editor *Stefan Beck*

Poetry Editor *David Yezzi*

Office Manager *Cricket Farnsworth*

Assistant to the Editors *David Spelber*

Editorial Intern *Marcus Plieninger*

Publisher 1982–1994 *Samuel Lipman*

Contributors to this issue

Brooke Allen's latest book is *Artistic License: Three Centuries of Good Writing and Bad Behavior* (Ivan R. Dee).

James Bowman is a resident scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Peter Champion's first book of poems is forthcoming this fall from University of Chicago Press.

Anthony Daniels is a doctor and writer whose most recent books are *Utopias Elsewhere* and *Monrovia Mon Amour*.

Martin Greenberg's translation of Goethe's *Faust* is available from Yale University Press.

John Gross's most recent book is *A Double Thread: Growing Up English and Jewish in London* (Ivan R. Dee).

Noel Malcolm is a Senior Research Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford University.

Harvey Mansfield is a Professor of Government, Harvard University. His essay is excerpted from a book on manliness forthcoming from Yale University Press.

Glyn Maxwell's most recent book of poems is *The Sugar Mile*, forthcoming in April from Houghton Mifflin.

Jeffrey Meyers's *Impressionist Quartet: The Intimate Genius of Manet and Morisot, Degas and Cassatt* will be published in May by Harcourt.

Jay Nordlinger is the managing editor of *National Review*.

David Pryce-Jones is a senior editor of *National Review*.

Andrew Roberts is currently writing a book entitled *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples Since 1900*.

Mark Steyn is the senior North American correspondent for Britain's Telegraph Group.

Karen Wilkin is the curator of "Jules Olitski: Six Decades" at The Goldman Warehouse, Miami, Florida (February 18 to April 15).

Keith Windschuttle's latest book is *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One, Van Diemen's Land 1803–1847* (Macleay Press).

Published monthly except July and August by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc., 900 Broadway, New York, NY 10003, a nonprofit public foundation as described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code, which solicits and accepts contributions from a wide range of sources, including public and private foundations, corporations, and the general public. ISSN 0734-0222. March 2005, Volume 23, Number 7. Subscriptions: \$48 for one year, \$88 for two. For Canada, add \$14 per year. For all other foreign subscriptions, add \$22 per year. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster and subscribers: send change of address, all remittances, and subscription inquiries to The New Criterion, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834. Copyright © 2005 by The Foundation for Cultural Review, Inc. Newsstand distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., One Media Way, 12406 Rt. 250, Milan, OH 44846. (800) 221-3148. Available in microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. All correspondence should be addressed to The New Criterion, 900 Broadway, Suite 602, New York, NY 10003. (212) 247-6980. Notice of nonreceipt must be sent to the Office Manager within three months of the issue date. Internet: www.newcriterion.com Email: letters@newcriterion.com

Advertising: Dawn Steeves Telephone: (212) 247-6980 Email: advertising@newcriterion.com.

Subscriptions: To subscribe, renew, or report a problem please call (800) 783-4903.

ZABRISKIE GALLERY

New York/Paris: Season 1980

March 8 – April 16, 2005

A survey of work exhibited 25 years ago
in celebration of the gallery's 50th anniversary

ZABRISKIE FIFTY YEARS

A 208-page hardcover book published by Ruder Finn Press
available at Zabriskie Gallery for \$50.

41 EAST 57 STREET, NEW YORK 10022
TEL 212.752.1223 FAX 212.752.1224
WWW.ZABRISKIEGALLERY.COM

Notes & Comments:

March 2005

Arthur Miller's conscience

What an outpouring of pious liberal sentimentality greeted the death of the playwright and left-wing icon Arthur Miller, aged 89, last month! *The Washington Post* teared up about the “shatteringly human frailty in his plays,” *The Chicago Tribune* mourned “the preeminent social conscience of the world stage,” Harold Pinter (who will get a similar send-off when the time comes) said his pal was “a landmark,” and *The Guardian* told us that the “international theatre community . . . had somehow assumed that the creator of an American archetype in Willy Loman . . . would live and write forever.” *Prensa Latina*, dateline Havana, fondly recalled Miller’s visit to Cuba in 2000, and extolled “an undisputed man of conscience” who “bashed the intolerance that spread in the U.S. during the Cold War, for fear that socialism overtook the world.” *The New York Times* really went to town with a front-page valentine that went on to occupy an additional two pages inside the paper. “Mr. Miller grappled with the weightiest matters of social conscience in his plays,” swooned our Paper of Record, “and in them often reflected or reinterpreted the stormy and very public elements of his own life—including a brief and rocky marriage to Marilyn Monroe and his staunch refusal to cooperate with the red-baiting House Un-American Activities Committee.” You

have to say this for the *Times*: it pushed all the buttons: Arthur Miller, Genius Playwright; Arthur Miller, Social Celebrity; Arthur Miller, Moral Paragon and Darling of the Left Establishment.

We wouldn’t for a moment dispute Arthur Miller’s high standing as a celebrity. In that, at least, he really was distinguished. As a playwright, however, he looks smaller and smaller. The folks at Powerline.com got it exactly right when they asked whether Miller “ever wrote anything worth seeing or reading after the play that kicked off his career in 1949, *Death of a Salesman*.” And even that period-piece melodrama is hard for anyone who has graduated from adolescence to take seriously.

Death of a Salesman instantly established Miller’s literary reputation. *The Crucible* (1953), his Salem-witch-trial allegory about HUAC, secured his political bona fides on the Left. It wasn’t until the summer of 2000, in an article for *The Guardian*, that Miller publicly spelled out the connection between his woodenly didactic allegory and what he called the “calamity” of “anti-communist rage” in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Although Miller acknowledged that “practically everyone” he knew was on the Left, he remained clueless about the infiltration of the American Communist Party

by hard-core Stalinists and KGB operatives. "I have never been able to believe in the reality of these people being actual or putative traitors," Miller wrote. "The unwelcome truth denied by the right was that the Hollywood writers accused of subversion were not a menace to the country, or even bearers of meaningful change. They wrote not propaganda but entertainment."

Whatever the limitations of Arthur Miller's capacity for belief, by the year 2000 the rest of the world had long known that Joseph McCarthy, whatever his failings and excesses, was essentially right about the presence of Soviet spies in the United States. Indeed, McCarthy was in many ways a godsend to the fellow-traveling Left. As the historian Ronald Radosh noted at the time,

scores of anti-Communist liberals and defenders of civil liberties rallied around the right of Communists and Socialists to be heard, although they despised their propaganda. Without "McCarthyism," the left-wing would actually have had less of a shield to hide behind: the attacks on their links to the Soviet Union allowed them to claim that anyone accused—such as Alger Hiss—was completely innocent, even when in fact they were guilty.

Quoting from an article by the espionage expert Thomas Powers, Radosh went on to observe that "the crisis which propelled Miller to write *The Crucible* was caused 'not only by the discovery of spies but by the denial of spies.' The Soviet Union was in fact running major spy networks, infiltrating the United States government, and the implications of this operation were not faced squarely by the United States until late in the game." To deal with the era as a "witch-hunt," as Miller did, is to ignore a crucial fact. "One cannot," Radosh concludes, "write about McCarthyism without first admitting that there were spies; the spies claimed idealism as a defense."

Arthur Miller told us that "The heart of the darkness was the belief that a massive, profoundly organized conspiracy was in place and carried forward mainly by a concealed phalanx of intellectuals, including labor activists, teachers, professionals, sworn to undermine the American government." But as we noted in these pages at the time, what Miller described as a paranoid fantasy we now know to be the historical truth.

Prozac for terrorists

"Democratic civilization," the French philosopher Jean-François Revel once observed, "is the first in history to blame itself because another power is trying to destroy it." We thought of Revel's comment when reading *The Daily Telegraph's* recent account of a thirty-five-year-old Algerian member of al Qaeda who had been released from a British prison because he was depressed. "G.," as the chap was identified, "had been released on house arrest after suffering a mental breakdown in custody." Well, you know how these Algerian terrorists are: they don't like to remain cooped-up at home. It makes them nervous. We don't know much about G., except that in October 2003 he was sent to jail because the Court had concluded that he had "actively assisted terrorists who have links to al-Qa'eda." So now the poor fellow is depressed. So what? Being bonkers is part of what it means to be a terrorist. Osama (if he is still with us) is probably pretty depressed, too. We certainly hope so. According to the police, G. violated house arrest by receiving unauthorized "visitors." (Who from? Did anyone check their headgear?) The Home Secretary wanted to send G. back to jail. But the judge, a Mr. Justice Collins, ruled that the crown had failed to prove "to the necessary standard" that G. had wrongly violated house arrest. G.'s solicitor likened the risk of bail being wrongly withdrawn to the "sword of Damocles hanging over anyone's head,"

and said that it was the “ultimate nightmare” for G. “to be at the mercy of secret evidence that he was unable to disprove.” Well, our ultimate nightmare is the spectacle of convicted terrorists set free courtesy of the suicidal machinations of liberal lawyers and conniving courts.

Columbia’s Jewish problem

Meet Joseph Massad. He is a professor in Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures at Columbia University. As has been widely noted (see, for example, James Panero’s report on our weblog at www.newcriterion.com), Massad is accused of asking one Israeli student who had served in the Israeli army, “How many Palestinians did you kill?” Sol Stern and Fred Siegel, writing in *The New York Sun*, reported that at a recent panel discussion at Columbia on conflict in the Middle East, Massad used the phrase “racist Israeli state” more than two dozen times and argued that Yasser Arafat “was in effect an Israeli collaborator for even talking about compromise.” The rash of anti-Semitic incidents at Columbia—best symbolized, perhaps, by the creation of an Edward Said Chair in Arab Studies (which is almost as good as the Alger Hiss Chair in the Humanities at Bard College)—has received national attention. So has the response by Lee Bollinger, Columbia’s president. Stung by the accusations, Bollinger appointed a committee to investigate. It has yet to deliver its findings, but we can already predict a whitewash. Why? Look at who is on the five-person committee. As the *The New York Post* reported, two members signed an anti-Israel divestment petition; one was Joseph Massad’s thesis advisor; another has written that Israel is responsible for global anti-Semitism; and the last is a university administrator “who ignored student complaints [about anti-Semitism] for months. The man who handpicked the committee, Nick Dirks, is married to a professor who

co-teaches a class with Massad.” How long will Columbia’s Trustees allow Lee Bollinger to preside over this travesty?

Full employment auf Deutsch

Are you looking for a sign of how Western civilization is faring? Consider Germany’s new policy for those seeking unemployment benefits. Citing an article from *The Daily Telegraph*, Stefan Beck reported on our weblog that in an effort to address its high unemployment, Germany is now requiring those receiving benefits to take any job available—even in the so-called “sexual services” sector. And why not? Prostitution is legal in Germany. *Ergo*, if you’re out of work and the local brothel has an opening, you are obliged to take the job. “The government had considered making brothels an exception on moral grounds,” the *Telegraph* wrote, “but decided that it would be too difficult to distinguish them from bars.” Now, it turns out that this particular report may have been an exaggeration. But everyone rushed to believe it because it was rooted in an alarming set of truths. Yes, there is a comic element to bureaucratic idiocy, real or imagined. But beneath the comedy is a somber point that Mark Steyn summed up in a recent column:

The waitress forced into prostitution by the government pimp is, at one level, merely an example of the unintended consequences that follow every legislative initiative. But, at another, it’s the logical reductio of the modern secular welfare state. . . . When you cede to the state the responsibility for feeding, clothing, housing yourself, for your parents’ retirement, and your own health care, it’s hardly surprising they can’t see what the big deal is about annexing your sex life as well.

The real issue is the state of a culture that can no longer manage the most elementary moral discriminations. It expects emancipation from civilizing civilization. What it gets is decadence.

The manliness of Theodore Roosevelt

by Harvey Mansfield

The most obvious feature of Theodore Roosevelt's life and thought is the one least celebrated today, his manliness. Somehow America in the twentieth century went from the explosion of assertive manliness that was TR to the sensitive males of our time who shall be and deserve to be nameless.

TR appeals to some conservatives today for his espousal of big government and national greatness, and all conservatives rather relish his political incorrectness. As a reforming progressive he used to appeal to liberals, but nowadays liberals are put off by the political incorrectness that conservatives rather sneakily enjoy. Conservatives keep their admiration under wraps because they fear the reaction of women should they celebrate his manliness. Liberals have delivered themselves, in some cases with discernible reluctance (I am thinking of President Clinton), to the feminists. Yet they too are concealing an embarrassment. Nothing was more obvious than Roosevelt's manliness because he made such a point of it not only in his own case but also as necessary for human progress. It was being a progressive that made him so eager to be manly. Here is gristle to chew for liberals and conservatives, both of whom—except for the feminists—have abandoned manliness mostly out of policy rather than abhorrence. With the Library of America's publication of his *Letters and Speeches* and *The Rough Riders, An Autobiography*, let's see how Roosevelt's manliness was at the center of his politics.¹

We can begin from the pragmatism of William James, who was one of Roosevelt's professors at Harvard. Pragmatism too is favored by both conservatives and liberals today, particularly those conservatives like President Bush the First because they distrust "the vision thing," and liberals like Richard Rorty because they believe in the vision thing but do not want to defend it with reasons. But pragmatism as James presented it was very much a philosophy for the tough-minded, the manly, as opposed to optimistic rationalists with tender temperaments. Roosevelt and James did not get on together. When Roosevelt praised the "strenuous life," James said that he was "still mentally in the *Sturm und Drang* period of early adolescence." And though Roosevelt took James's course at Harvard, he was not a disciple of James, who might have fallen into the category of "educated men of weak fibre" whom Roosevelt was pleased to excoriate. The point of James's criticism was his distaste for the Spanish-American war, which Roosevelt liked so much. Yet the two agreed on manliness. Roosevelt, had he taken note of pragmatism, would have been happy to begin from James's notion of "tough-minded."

¹ *Letters and Speeches*, by Theodore Roosevelt; Library of America, 915 pages, \$35.

Rough Riders, An Autobiography, by Theodore Roosevelt; Library of America, 895 pages, \$35.

Roosevelt's first thought would have been to make James's tough-minded philosophers tougher by emphasizing determination and will-power over opinions about the universe. "In this life we get nothing save by effort," he said, dismissing God and nature by which we have the faculties that make possible our kind of effort. Roosevelt was a sickly, asthmatic child who, by the advice of his father and with constant exercise, made himself fit not only for survival but for feats of manly aggression. His father's advice had been to lengthen the reach of his mind by strengthening his body, using sheer will-power. Roosevelt did just that. He went in for boxing, a skill that enabled him to knock people around, that must have fed his love of rivalry, and that could easily have encouraged him to exaggerate the power of will-power. He spoke frequently of "character," but by this he meant just one character, the energetic character—forgetting other forms of determination to set one's own course in life. He concentrated not so much on the mind as on the instrument of the mind.

Today, following James and TR, we are in the habit of calling someone tough-minded if he looks at things empirically—meaning not wishing them to be better than they are—and weak-minded if he reasons or rationalizes things as he wants them to be. Of course, if temperament controls the mind (as James argued), you are more in control when you are tough rather than tender or weak or wishful or wistful; so under that condition the advantage goes to manliness. And it also goes to men rather than women, because will-power in this view requires a stronger, more athletic body.

Thus, according to TR, manliness is in the main a construction, an individual construction of one's own will-power. To make the construction, a man should engage in "the manly art of self-defense" against other men, but he should also seek encounters with nature in the form of dangerous animals. He must hunt. "Teddy" got his nickname from all the bears he shot, all the cubs he made orphans. A New Yorker by birth, he went to

the Wild West, and became a Westerner by deliberate intent, or sheer will-power. He became a cowboy by impressing the other cowboys, a loner among loners certified with their stamp of approval. In this way the individual construction becomes social: after you have proved yourself. The theorists today who say masculinity is a social construction often give the impression that there's nothing to it; society waves a wand and a nerd is made manly. No, it takes effort to become manly, as Teddy Roosevelt says. The more manliness is constructed, the more effort it takes. The more we admire effort like TR's rather than the beautiful nature and noble ease of Homer's Achilles, the more we admire will-power manliness and the more we depend on it.

Will-power manliness can also appear to have an air of desperation or can be said to be desperate underneath despite an air of confidence on the surface. Some would interpret TR's manliness as too emphatic to be true, because true manliness has more quiet in its confidence, less stridency in its assertiveness. Yet if all we know is based on social construction, meaning that all we know is contingently based on how society is now—and so manliness is impermanent and will pass away in our gender-neutral society—then it is reasonable to feel anxiety instead of confidence. And it might be reasonable to cover up one's anxiety with loud bluffing, like TR, because some kind of society is better than nothing.

For all that TR may have absorbed from Charles Darwin and William James in favor of will-power and thus against the reliability and reassurance that nature might provide to human designs, he was certainly, we would say today, an environmentalist. He believed as we do that nature left alone is valuable to humans. Though he believed in will-power, he also believed in a nature that deserves to be preserved despite our will-power. He did not use the neutral word "environment," an evasion that does not disclose what the environment surrounds or in what measure it nurtures or harms what it surrounds. He liked to speak of "the

Strenuous Life” lived outdoors and testing oneself in situations of challenge and risk.

Whereas environmentalists today do their best to exclude human intervention in nature—“nature” for them means what is non-human—and thus to confine human beings to the role of concerned and caring observers, Roosevelt wanted us to live with nature and react to it. He loved birds but he didn’t object to shooting them. We should, within limits, be hunters, for hunting adds “no small value to the national character.” Nature does need to be protected from depletion, and there must be game wardens, “men of courage, resolution and hardihood”—not lecturers full of moral urgency passing out lists of small prohibitions as one meets in the National Parks today. TR’s program of conservation was like William James’s moral equivalent of war, quite contrary to environmentalism today, which desires universal peace, seeks no moral equivalent of war, and on its fringe (did you know that TR invented the phrase “lunatic fringe”?) wants to extend the welfare state from needy humans to all the presumed unfortunates of subhuman nature.

“Conservation” is for the purpose of conserving nature, which is for the purpose of conserving manliness. Manliness wants risk, not comfort and convenience. Roosevelt had his own, brazenly exclusive moralism; he liked being “in cowboy land” because it enabled him to “get into the mind and soul of the average American of the right type.” His democracy satisfies not merely the average American but one *of the right type*. “Life is a great adventure, and the worst of all fears is the fear of living.” Who would say now that visiting a National Park is a great adventure? Yellowstone, where TR gave one of his most famous speeches in 1903, is now no more, perhaps less, an adventure than visiting Disneyland with its artificial thrills. Yellowstone, he said, would ensure to future generations “much of the old-time pleasure of the hardy life of the wilderness and of the hunter in the wilderness . . . kept for all who have the love of adventure and the hardihood to take advantage of it.”

To challenge the manliness of average Americans of the right type, nature is not chaotic but scenic. To gaze on it is wondrous or sublime; nature does not coddle you but it is not an abyss you must leap across. TR was tough-minded but not a nihilist because being tough-minded requires that you have the right degree of challenge, enough to give you a charge but well short of inducing despair.

The manly reaction to the great outdoors that Roosevelt expected was not to live the life of a woodsman, but to seek positive responsibility for society. His own trip to the Wild West enabled him to become one of the cowboys and then prompted him to return East with energy refreshed. One can certainly question whether it is more manly to be alone and self-sufficient or to be responsible and political. One might make the case that a scholar like William James, however incapable of boxing and hunting, is more manly by himself than is TR with his need to be admired and elected to office by average people of the right sort. In a notable chapter of his *Autobiography* entitled “Outdoors and Indoors,” Roosevelt says that love of books and love of outdoors go hand in hand, both being loners’ occupations and neither requiring wealth. He himself loved both, but he seems to regard them as preparation for politics rather than attractive mainly for themselves.

TR is at his most emphatic in urging a man to enter politics. Not for him a bland, mollicoddle word like our “participation.” Finding no positive term strong enough to please him, he repeats negative verbs, his favorites being *shirk* and *shrink*, to show his contempt for those who abstain from politics. To be efficient and practical a man must ready himself “to meet men of far lower ideals than his own” and not be content “to associate merely with cultivated, refined men of high ideals and sincere purpose to do right.” Politics is struggle, and “it is sheer unmanliness and cowardice to shrink from the contest.” You see what I mean about *shrink*; and note how vices are

magnified with *sheer* in front of them. Not for TR the use of *weasel words*, another phrase he coined or made his own.

Here is where the professors like William James go wrong; they consort with one another, cherish their ideals, and shirk their duty to join the actual battle that is less pleasant than discussion with friends over tea. The tough-minded manly man not only accepts pain but actually does his best to avoid pleasure. Yet isn't manliness for all its risks and trials pleasant for the manly man? And not only at the end of the day? Roosevelt wants his manly man in politics to accommodate himself to the rough and coarse and the selfish, and this would seem to compromise rather than fulfill his manliness by making it depend on success in his relations with others beneath himself. He might become a team player or an organization man, hardly roles for a manly man. So we must not forget the manly loner and the argument to be made on his behalf. The loner would be contemptuous of bookish professors, but he shares with them a taste for solitude.

Roosevelt, however, would insist on the superiority of manly responsibility to manly aloofness, of which one sign is his attitude towards women. As if speaking closer to today, he declares that "women [must be put] on a footing of complete and entire equal rights with men," including "the right to enter any profession she desires on the same terms as a man." Yet normally, he adds, "the woman must remain the housemother, the homekeeper, and the man must remain the breadwinner." That is because we must not live in a regime of rights abstracted from the performance of duty with "indulgence in vapid ease." In effect, women are not equal to men according to TR, but both above and below them. Women receive the bread won for them by men, and delivered to them with gallantry. But they are models of effeminacy, the very thing a man must avoid.

Roosevelt's remarks on American motherhood tell us something about the preference of the manly man for duty over virtue. Im-

pelled by the self-drama of manliness, which posits risk and challenge at every turn, Roosevelt turns away from the American, constitutional notion of rights to embrace a sterner "sense of duty" that appears more Germanic and Kantian. Even virtue might be too undemanding for him, for the virtuous person finds virtue to be pleasantly harmonious with his inclination, does not worry about his will-power, and does not struggle to be good. Roosevelt does speak of manly virtues, but these are habits of the zestful performance of duty. Duty gives shape to will-power, directing and checking it; and society—not the loner—defines duty.

TR's manliness appears also in his advocacy of equality of opportunity, a phrase not be found in the founders of liberalism that he and his friend Herbert J. Croly were perhaps the first to use. Today "equality of opportunity" is a conservative slogan opposed to the liberals' "equality of result." For TR, equal opportunity is not the passive policy of a neutral government that watches benignly over the rivalry of talented people as they compete to succeed. Nor is it like the mixture of hard work and shrewd manipulation set forth in Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* by which an individual can rise to public esteem without challenging society's prejudices. Neither is it Thomas Jefferson's "aristocracy of talents," which assumes that in a free country talent will find the means to propel itself to the top. Instead, equal opportunity shows both concern for virtue and affirmative action by government. It requires that individuals accept a duty to grasp opportunity and to go as far as they can. Lack of interest in success—goofing off on long vacations, relaxing in early retirement, or indulging in refined leisure of any sort—is not an option. And equal opportunity results from the use of government to equalize opportunity by making things harder for the rich (with a graduated income tax and an inheritance tax) and thus easier for the poor. But Roosevelt would not use government to reduce the effort required of the poor. They should be manly too. Manliness is preferable to any life of ease or riskless routine.

TR as president was a great promoter of assertiveness in the exercise of executive power. His notion of the president's duty was not bound to actions authorized in the actual words of the Constitution. In a notable exchange with his Republican rival William Howard Taft, who held that belief, Roosevelt declared that the president is "the steward of the people, bound actively and affirmatively to do all he could for the people, and not to content himself with the negative merit of keeping his talents undamaged in a napkin." The American founders made an executive power strong enough to stand up to popular opinion and to withstand the temptation to seek popularity, but progressives like Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson made the president into a "leader"—that is, on occasion a follower—of public opinion. TR, for all his promotion of positive merit (in which he borrows words of the Gospel), is still a steward—and how manly is that? Who is more manly: George Washington, a man of dignity not to be trifled with, or Teddy Roosevelt, steward of the people, who sees humiliating constraint in the Constitution but not in popular favor? Here we detect a soft core to TR's blustering, outer toughness.

The same might be said of Roosevelt's imperialism. TR was no "chicken hawk," no armchair, theoretical imperialist whose main concern is with the *ist* or *ism* at the end of the word, and whose only action is egging others on. Quite the contrary! Having got himself named Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President William McKinley in 1897, he was in office when the U.S. battleship *Maine* was blown up in the harbor of Havana in February 1898. But of course he was not the Secretary of the Navy. So he waited ten days until his boss took the afternoon off for a massage; then, having been routinely designated Acting Secretary, TR sprang into action—summoning experts, sending instructions around the world for the Navy to be ready for war, ordering supplies and ammunition, and requesting authorization from Congress for unlimited recruitment of seamen. In four

hours he created momentum toward war that neither his hapless superior nor the President could stem.

After war was declared on April 19, Roosevelt, his alacrity now red-hot zeal, was offered command of a cavalry troop to be formed of frontiersmen, dubbed by him Rough Riders. He declined the command for lack of experience, but took second-in-command as being an office he knew how to work from. In short order Roosevelt formed the troop consisting of cowboys leavened with polo players, having them ready by the end of May. At considerable personal risk, TR led his troops in the famous charge up San Juan Hill and, when he reached the top, shot and killed one of the enemy. After the action he was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor, America's highest decoration for bravery in battle. When he did not receive the medal, he was not too proud to lobby for it, anxious as he was to prevent the War Department from doing an injustice.

In all this Roosevelt grasped his opportunities, or as we would say in his spirit, faced his responsibilities. Responsibilities as we use the word often attach to an office, and they might seem to be particular to it—whether president, assistant secretary, or a nonpolitical office such as parent. But TR's will-power manliness looks at the office as an excuse for action rather than the source of a duty imposed on the officeholder. It was manly of TR to seek the office, which he did eagerly rather than dutifully. Yet we cannot overlook the fact that taking on a responsibility is—nonetheless for its enthusiasm—accepting a duty. And it is a duty to those less competent and willful than oneself, hence a compromise of one's own freedom and independence. Again we can ask whether it is more manly to be a loner or a take-charge guy. It takes will-power to withdraw as well as to commit oneself; either way could be condemned or praised as willful. To be sure, TR tries to make it appear that one who shirks or shrinks from his responsibility lacks the will-power of a

man, but that is not necessarily so. Even in the form of an opportunity, responsibility is a constraint on one's will. It is a self-constraint, perhaps, yet still a constraint—and thus not pure will-power. It reflects a desire to meet the legitimate expectations of society.

Pragmatism is an idea with this same ambivalence in its dichotomy between the tough-minded who want to be assertive and the tender-minded who want to fit in. These two contrary temperaments reflect two moods in the use of the word. In American English, pragmatism means *getting it done* ("let's be pragmatic"), implying active energy, and *taking satisfaction in less* ("you have to be pragmatic"), implying a degree of resignation. To be pragmatic is optimism that our problems can be solved, but how can we solve them, given the doubt we are taught by pragmatism in the efficacy of reason? Reason is disdained by pragmatism as being prompted by the tender wish that things will somehow fit together on their own. Progress under pragmatism requires an addition of will-power, of manly assertiveness, to reason so that reason, in the form of science, does not construct a

boring, peaceable civilization that appeals only to mollicoddles and fails to meet the ambition of humans who want dignity more than peace. The trouble is that the manliness needed to express confidence depends on doubt of reason, yet reason is the source of our confidence in better things to come. When you add manliness to reason so as to make reason more capable, you also subtract from the capability of reason. The danger to progress is that manliness, instead of endorsing reason, will get the better of reason.

Contrary to what you might first think, pragmatism is a philosophy, not the dismissal of philosophy. And Teddy Roosevelt was more a philosopher than he knew. His advocacy of manliness reflects the difficulties of pragmatism and tells us something about our situation today. We have abandoned—not reason for manliness like the pragmatists, nor manliness for reason like their tender-minded opponents—but both reason and manliness. We want progress without a rational justification and without the manliness needed to supply the lack of a justification.

Betjeman: a “whim of iron”

by Brooke Allen

The obsession of academic critics with differentiating “major” writers from “minor” ones, and summarily dismissing the latter, serves the interest of no one but their fellow-academics and actively harms not only those authors they deem minor, but also that large majority of the public who reads novels and poems purely for pleasure, with no scholarly or careerist motives. Within the academy, “major,” at least since the heyday of Eliot and Pound, has tended to mean “difficult”—possibly because difficulty supposes a need for expert interpretation and therefore justifies the existence of professional explicators. Kipling and Trollope, for example, so popular during the Victorian era as to have become an integral part of England’s cultural fabric, are not only ignored in modern universities but actively denigrated.

This has also been true of postwar England’s bestselling poet, John Betjeman (1906–1984). The euphony of his words, the immediacy of his images, his mastery of traditional meter and rhyme schemes, in short the pure accessibility of his work has guaranteed its exclusion from “serious” studies of twentieth-century poetry. He simply did not fit into the modernist tradition, and his hugely successful career as a television personality and expert on the sort of architecture that had hitherto been considered pure kitsch did not raise his stock in academic circles. The 1993 edition of *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and*

Poetics, for instance, made no mention of Betjeman in all of its 1,383 pages. Neither did the 626 pages of *A Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature* (2001).

Technically, Betjeman did not advance beyond Tennyson, Praed, or Newbolt. For him, as Philip Larkin wrote (admiringly), “there has been no symbolism, no objective correlative, no T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, no reinvestment in myth of casing of language as gesture, no *Seven Types* or *Some Versions* . . .” (Larkin allowed, however, that Betjeman did have a *White Goddess*: “in blazer and shorts.”) His subject matter was almost aggressively retrograde; William Plomer smiled at the thought of “a new generation which is used to verse garnished with pylons and bombers and Arms for Spain and anti-Nazism and Hampstead surrealism” being “shocked by a poet who alludes to pink may, laburnum, tinned peas, cigar ends, church bells, gym shoes, deviled whitebait, hockey girls, picnics, racing-stables, and old City dining-rooms.” And what other poet of his era would seriously have applied a Wordsworthian sense of wonder and joy to an utterly banal activity, as he did in “Seaside Golf”?

it lay content

Two paces from the pin,
A steady putt and then it went
Oh, most surely in.
The very turf rejoiced to see
That quite unprecedented three.

Ah! Seaweed smells from sandy caves
And thyme and mist in whiffs,
In-coming tide, Atlantic waves
Slapping the sunny cliffs,
Lark song and sea sounds in the air
And splendour, splendour everywhere.

Minor Betjeman might have been, but the poets who were his contemporaries, at least in England, thought him valuable and unique and banished the futile major/minor distinction to the irrelevance it has always deserved. To Edmund Blunden, Betjeman's work was "of the kind which makes the question of major and minor poets seem quite academic, at least while one reads and responds." Even Edmund Wilson, king of critics, opined in the 1950s that "Since Dylan Thomas's death [Betjeman] is, I suppose, the best poet in England—a minor poet, perhaps, but a very, very good one." The fact that "minor" and "best" are not mutually exclusive terms might come as a surprise to academically trained readers.

Bevis Hillier, for one, entertains no doubts as to Betjeman's place in the canon, for he has dedicated more than twenty-five years of his life to writing a biography that is not only definitive but likely to remain so forever: it is hard to imagine anyone ever trying to top this three-volume, 1,530-page whopper.¹ Even those who love the written word, and love Betjeman, might shy away from this doorstep. Betjeman himself suggested to Hillier that the proposed volumes would probably sell very well in old-people's homes, and indeed one does wonder just how many people (as opposed to libraries) will buy this sequence: probably only true fanatics, sadly, so that it is doubtful whether it will win the poet many new readers.

Still, sheer volume of detail can some-

times wear down the reader's resistance, and this is such a case: after one has read eight or nine hundred pages, why not go on forever? And when an author expends himself on this sort of leisurely history, wonderful items turn up that might never appear in a more tightly controlled narrative. Where else, for example, could one find Osbert Lancaster's fabulous "Ode on the Wedding of Thomas Driberg, Esq., MP," from which I will quote a stanza? (Driberg was a well-known homosexual.)

But hark, the Bishop's on his toes
To ask if anybody knows
"Just impediment or cause."
There follows then an awkward pause.
In every heart an anxious fear
Of what we half expect to hear.
Strike the organ! Beat the bell!
The Past is silent! All is well!

Or Sir John Drummond's description of his backstage conversation with Barry Humphries (a.k.a. Dame Edna Everage) about the aged Betjeman's terminal illness:

All [the talk] was a normal part of our shared concern for a much loved friend. But, though he can apparently do the voice when wearing male clothes, he cannot stop using the voice when got up as Edna, and I found it quite intolerable to be talking about the imminent death of one of my most cherished friends with this shrieking virago. I have always had more than a soft spot for Dame Edna . . . but in these circumstances she was too much and I excused myself apologetically.

There are countless such gems in this work. Many people are said to have known "everyone," but in Betjeman's case this is almost literally true, and while Hillier often gives minor figures in the poet's life unduly thorough treatment, there is enough gold to justify most of the dross.

John Betjeman, like so many writers, both loved and hated the social milieu from which he sprang, in his case, the well-upholstered Edwardian middle class. The

¹ *Young Betjeman*, by Bevis Hillier; John Murray, 496 pages, \$18.70 (paper).

John Betjeman: New Fame, New Love, by Bevis Hillier; John Murray, 752 pages, \$18.70 (paper).

Betjeman: The Bonus of Laughter, by Bevis Hillier; John Murray, 745 pages, \$45.

Betjemanns (the final, embarrassingly Germanic “n” was removed from the name by the poet himself) were unredeemably bourgeois. Worse, they were “in trade,” albeit a luxury trade: G. Betjemann & Sons were cabinet-makers. When John’s father Ernest took over the business, its most popular item had been, surreal as this may seem, something called “the Betjemann patent tantalus,” an apparatus for locking decanters of drink away from the servants—a detail which might have come straight out of John’s favorite *Diary of a Nobody*. Ernest built the firm into a provider of very high-end craftsmanship that catered to Asprey’s, Harrod’s, and “the maharajah market.”

The poet spent his early childhood in semi-suburban Highgate before his upwardly mobile parents moved to Chelsea. “The Betjemanns’ stucco [Highgate] villa was about half-way up the social graph: the ideal vantage-point for gaining a nice sense of English social distinctions. Snobbery is a branch of applied sociology, and in this discipline John proved instinctually adept.” His memories of one particular children’s party are especially poignant. From “False Security”:

Can I forget my delight at the conjuring show?
And wasn’t I proud that I was the last to go?
Too overexcited and pleased with myself to
know
That the words I heard my hostess’s mother
employ
To a guest departing, would ever diminish my
joy,
I WONDER WHERE JULIA FOUND THAT
STRANGE,
RATHER COMMON LITTLE BOY?

In Highgate he soaked up the ambiance that had provided inspiration to Marvell, Coleridge, Hopkins, and Housman; at Highgate Preparatory School, one of his teachers was the young T. S. Eliot. Later he was sent as a boarder to the Dragon School in Oxford, where he came under the tutelage of the influential headmaster A. E. (“Hum”) Lynam. “Hum’s preoccupation with religion

and the school services, I realize now, greatly affected me. Here was this great, but never remote and always kind man, interested in religion.” Thus began Betjeman’s life-long love affair with English churches. Thus, too, began his love for Oxford: not so much the university with its dreaming spires as the dowdy, Gothic Revival North Oxford with its “ill-paid dons, suburban gardens, petty gossip, tinned peas, toothbrushes airing on the window-sill.” (This is also the territory, some might remark, of Barbara Pym, who claimed to have been influenced more by Betjeman than by her fellow-novelists.)

Note the importance, in the above random list, of props and places almost as stage sets. Harold Acton would later call Betjeman “a genius of the *genius loci*, either pastoral or suburban,” and many have considered him primarily a poet of place. Betjeman objected strongly to this formulation.

I am not a pure poet of place. I bear no resemblance to Bloomfield or Clare and very little to Crabbe and only a little to Cowper but much more to him than the other three. This means to say that I write (and I know this) primarily with *people* in mind and relate the people to the background. When I am describing Nature, it is *always* with a view to the social background or the sense of Man’s impotence before the vastness of the Creator.

That is, he clearly sees and communicates the places he describes, but always with a corresponding understanding of the *lives* lived in these places. This quality applied equally to his professional forays into architecture. As Osbert Lancaster put it: “almost alone among contemporary writers on art, he is capable of whisking a building or a town out of the sterilized oxygen-tent in which the professional antiquarians have placed it. . . . He is aware not only of the Saxon mouldings round the font but also of the tin bowl from the chain stores which the churchworker has left on top.”

Betjeman knew from a very early age that he wished to be a poet, and educated himself accordingly. This may be one reason, as

Hillier speculates, that his poetry is technically so old-fashioned: he learned his craft in childhood, with Victorian models, while his contemporaries began as university students, with modernism. Lord David Cecil reminded Hillier, "You have no idea how original it was for John to be writing in the style of Tennyson and other Victorians when his friends were all pastiching Eliot." The primary poetic influence of his childhood was indeed Tennyson, and it would be fair to say that Tennyson was the primary poetic influence of his mature years as well. From "Indoor Games near Newbury":

Rich the makes of motor whirring,
Past the pine-plantation purring
Come up, Hupmobile, Delage!
Short the way your chauffeurs travel,
Crunching over private gravel
Each from out his warm garage.

At the age of fifteen Betjeman was sent to Marlborough, an institution Spartan even by the standards of other English public schools of the era. One of the poet's contemporaries described it as "the most awful barbarous place, and it was extraordinary that people were willing to pay large sums of money to subject their children to it." Full emphasis, of course, was given to the classics, with little attempt to render the study palatable—much less, as in subsequent argot, "relevant." Beverley Nichols, who was at the school just before Betjeman, said that Greek was taught at Marlborough "as though it were not merely dead but as though it had never lived at all," and Betjeman conceived a loathing for the Greek master, one A. R. Gidney, that he nursed for half a century and that rivaled his later great hates for his Oxford tutor, C. S. Lewis, and the art historian Nikolaus Pevsner.

The future poet Louis MacNeice was a fellow-pupil, and his memories show Betjeman as he left childhood's chrysalis and became the "character" that would soon be let loose on the world: "John Betjeman at that time looked like a will-o'-the-wisp with Latin blood in it. His face was the colour of

peasoup and his eyes were soupy too and his mouth was always twisting sideways in a mocking smile and he had a slight twist in his speech which added a tang to his mimicries, syncopating the original just as a slightly rippling sheet of water jazzes the things reflected in it. He was a brilliant mimic but also a mine of information and a triumphant misfit."

Oxford, to which Betjeman repaired in 1925 only after twice failing the math and Latin exam required for entrance, greeted the misfit with open arms. Whenever possible he escaped the company of the uncongenially hearty C. S. Lewis and came under the benign influence—as so many of his distinguished contemporaries did—of the eccentric and iconoclastic dons Maurice Bowra and "Colonel" George Kolkhorst. Many of the friends he made there were for life: Kenneth Clark, who would employ him during the Second World War; John Sparrow, the well-known academic; the novelists Henry [Yorke] Green and Anthony Powell; the rich Edward James, who published Betjeman's first book of poems; W. H. Auden, with whom he seems at one point to have enjoyed a brief sexual liaison; Alan Pryce-Jones, the editor and writer; the Labour politician Hugh Gaitskell; the cartoonist Osbert Lancaster; the aristocrats Patrick Balfour (later Lord Kinross), Frank Pakenham (later the Earl of Longford), Billy Clonmore (later the Earl of Wicklow); and Basil, the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, who was killed in the war and with whom Betjeman claimed to have been more in love than with anyone else in his life.

A word on Betjeman's sexuality: his early experiences, as with so many of his public school and university contemporaries, were homosexual. In later life, Hillier says, "John's tastes were predominantly heterosexual, but he liked to speculate about the 'percentage' of homosexuality in people's psychological make-up, including his own. He commented on a well-known Conservative politician, 'I never realized what percent he was until I saw him pouring tea.'

His own 'percentage' probably remained above the average, but Alan Pryce-Jones thought that John's occasional professions of homosexuality should not be taken too literally." Late in life, he speculated on his tastes: "I think by nature I'm masochistic. So far as the body is concerned I prefer taking orders to giving them." Hence his famous *penchant* for muscular, sporty girls, especially tennis players and cyclists. From "A Subaltern's Love Song":

Love-thirty, love-forty, oh! weakness of joy,
The speed of a swallow, the grace of a boy,
With carefulest carelessness, gaily you won,
I am weak from your loveliness, Joan Hunter
Dunn.

Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, Miss Joan Hunter
Dunn,
How mad I am, sad I am, glad that you won.
The warm-handled racket is back in its press,
But my shock-headed victor, she loves me no
less.

He made a bit of a joke of it (glimpsing a strapping woman one day in the Tate Gallery, he squawked to his companion, "Oh I say, wouldn't you like to be pushed in a pram by her round Hyde Park?"), but it was real enough, proved by the fact that both his wife and his long-time mistress, different though they were, belonged to the dominatrix type.

Betjeman made a strong impression at the university (his eccentric attachment to his teddy-bear Archie, for instance, was immortalized by Evelyn Waugh in *Brideshead Revisited's* ill-fated Sebastian Flyte). But his academic career was not a success. His downfall, ironically, was persistent failure in Divinity, which at that time was required for a degree. How he managed to fail a subject in which he was already beginning to acquire an encyclopedic knowledge is something of a mystery. In Bowra's opinion, "unconsciously he wished to fail. . . . He had no wish to take his finals, for which he had done very little work, and

found instinctively a way out." Sent down without a degree in 1928, he followed the example of countless other Oxford failures (including both Waugh and one of his creations, Paul Pennyfeather in *Decline and Fall*) and betook himself to Gabbittas and Thring, scholastic agents.

He fetched up at Heddon Court, Cockfosters. While the other masters thought him a subversive influence, he was rapturously received by the boys, as one of them recalled years later.

The hitherto familiar and laborious hours of "parsing" and grammar were transformed into the sounds and usage and rhythms of words conveyed with such inspiration that sparks of understanding seemed to be struck from every single and different boy in the classroom. Few, if any, were insulated from J.B.'s electrifying and entirely communicable vision of literature.

Intimations, in short, of Betjeman's remarkable appeal and success as a television performer and popularizer of architecture in later years. "The great thing about John," said one of his producers, "is that he wanted you to *share* his love and enthusiasm." His style of didacticism did not significantly change during the course of his life. At Heddon Court he turned the school's high regard for games upside-down and promoted his own idols, literature and architecture. "He made it all such fun," recalled the former student, "and so attractive, that we readily accepted his standards."

But he never had any intention of wasting his life in an obscure boys' school. He soon procured a job as third in command at *The Architectural Review*, a magazine that had a good deal of influence in the architecture world. To be anti-modernist was then akin to sacrilege, and Betjeman toed the line with the best of them, although doubts were already beginning to simmer. But he was to prove constitutionally unable to stick to any job for long. Novelty inevitably "degenerated into routine, routine into drudgery." When Peter Quennell visited Betjeman at the *Review* office, he remembered a desk heaped

with papers. "Among them," said Quennell, "I saw a huge blotting-pad, evidently quite new, on which, using a sharp pencil and decorative Gothic script, he had inscribed the now familiar couplet: "I sometimes think that I should like/ To be the saddle of a bike." Betjeman brought in clever new contributors like Waugh, Lancaster, and Billy Clonmore, but he was the world's most unlikely apostle of modernism and when the chance came to edit county guides for a series that Shell-Mex was planning to put out, he grabbed it. The guides, when they appeared, were superb: Betjeman, again, brought in high-level contributors, including Quennell, Waugh, Paul Nash, and his new bosom friend John Piper, with whom he collaborated to produce the Shropshire volume.

Once liberated from the modernist party line, Betjeman was free to develop and indulge his real passions: Victorian and Georgian architecture, and churches. Nancy Mitford's light novel *Christmas Pudding* provides a good caricature of him at this period in the campy person of Paul Fotheringay, a fey foil to the solid county characters. "John B.," commented Waugh in his diary at about this period, "became a bore rather with Irish peers and revivalist hymns and his enthusiasm for every sort of architecture." Betjeman and his cronies liked to make a bit of a game of their interests, choosing some inconsequential neighborhood, or suburb, or odd building and paying it mystifying homage. Waugh has given the best description of the routine, which Betjeman would develop and fine-tune over the years:

The normal process of Betjemanizing is first the undesired stop in a provincial English town, then the "discovery" there of a rather peculiar police station, *circa* 1880; the enquiry and identification of its architect. Further research reveals that a Methodist Chapel in another town is by the same hand. Then the hunt is up. More buildings are identified. The obscure name is uttered with a reverence befitting Bernini. The senile master is found

to be alive, in distressed circumstances in a northern suburb of London. He is a "character"; he has vague, personal memories of other long dead, equally revered contemporaries. In his last years he is either rejuvenated or else driven mad to find himself the object of pilgrimage.

Betjeman's first volume of poetry, *Mount Zion* (1932), and his first book of prose, *Ghastly Good Taste* (1933), were written at around the same time, and the poetry is just as truthful a reflection of his architectural and antiquarian interests as the prose. (Note some of the titles of the poems: "Croydon," "Westgate-on Sea," "For Nineteenth-Century Burials.") It is all funny, in best Betjeman style, but those with discernment could sense his underlying seriousness and even formulate it for him: as the *Country Life* reviewer of *Ghastly Good Taste* wrote, "Behind the persiflage is his conviction that good architecture is the expression of a faith, and herein lies the originality of his approach to the old story of architecture's history. He does not mind what the faith may be—mystical, rational, or intellectual; chapel, church, or State—but he believes fervently in the need for it. When it becomes self-conscious, art declines, and when it disappears, beauty vanishes with it, he declares."

It was perhaps with this sense of the *necessity* of faith rather than any deep personal beliefs that Betjeman eventually deviated from Quakerism and chose his own religious path, that of High Anglicanism. It was Anglicanism's historic broadness and inclusiveness that held him: "the dear old rumbling Church of England which is high, low and broad all at one . . . the Catholic Church of this country." The Roman Catholic Church, with its certainties and infallibilities, distressed him. Religion and family: traditionally sources of shelter, comfort, and certitude. Yet neither was to prove such for Betjeman. Religion for him was inextricably tied up with fear—possibly the legacy of a Calvinist nanny—and Family with guilt.

Betjeman clearly wanted to marry “up”; two of his first serious girlfriends were Lady Mary St. Clair Erskine and the Honorable Pamela Mitford. His final choice was Penelope Chetwode, the daughter of Field-Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, the Army’s Commander-in-Chief in India.

Penelope had inherited—or at any rate acquired—her father’s commanding, super-assured manner. A bossy, horsy girl, apparently the quintessence of the fearsome English *memsahib*, she perfectly fit with Betjeman’s wish for female domination. (For those who are interested, Penelope is portrayed as the title character in Evelyn Waugh’s *Helena* and also figures in Lord Berners’s camp classics, *The Camel* and *Far from the Madding War*; she is also the model for Philippa Townsend in Bruce Chatwin’s *On the Black Hill*.) The German maid who worked for the Betjemans during their early days together initially assumed that John’s Christian name was “Shutup,” as that was how he was frequently addressed. Even Penelope’s closest friends found her exhausting. Many years later James Lees-Milne reacted with panic to the idea of her coming to live nearby: “I don’t think I could bear it. I love her dearly, but she is impossible to be with for more than two hours. She bulldozes one, is utterly self-centred. She overwhelms and overbears.”

Youthful high spirits saw them through the first years. Their home at Uffington in Berkshire was a hive of social and domestic activity. “Penelope invented ‘free range’ long before anybody thought up the expression,” recalled Lancaster. “The place was an animal sanctuary—and it stank.” Penelope, he wrote, had “a missionary zeal for widening the cultural horizons of her rural neighbors” and “under her direction the Uffington Women’s Institute became a transforming influence and its ceaseless activities demanded the full co-operation of all her friends.” One evening, “the principal item on the programme was a performance of ‘Summer is icumen in’ sung by Adrian Bishop, Maurice Bowra, my wife and the poet himself, accompanied on the piano by

Lord Berners and by Penelope on a strange instrument resembling a zither. My own contribution to the ensemble took the form of a flute *obbligato*. So powerful was the effect that all remained rooted to their seats.”

Powerful, confident wife, adoring husband, happy years. . . . But things are seldom as simple as they seem. The apparently ineffectual Betjeman proved to be a master of passive-aggression and had, as Anthony Powell once noticed, “a whim of iron.” He immediately gained the emotional upper hand in the marriage, though it seemed to be a source of guilt rather than enjoyment to him. He and Penelope were never compatible, and his infidelities—along with her jealousy—were fatal. When he permanently transferred his affections to Lady Elizabeth Cavendish in the 1950s not only Penelope but he, too, suffered. Fatherhood was not much better. “Of all the fathers I have known, not excepting myself, he was the worst,” wrote Alan Pryce-Jones. “I think he liked the *idea* of being a father. . . . But he found that being a father was no fun at all.” Relations with his daughter Candida tended to be smooth, but he teased Paul, his son, mercilessly. The boy responded by drawing as far away as possible; father and son were estranged for many years.

Betjeman’s reputation as a poet rose steadily. In 1937 his new publisher, John Murray, brought out *Continual Dew*, then *Old Lights for New Chancels* in 1940 and *New Bats in Old Belfries* at the end of the war. Having started out as a coterie figure with a cultish readership, Betjeman began reaching an ever-widening group, until eventually he became the nation’s best-selling and possibly best-loved poet. The feat he performed as a poet is rather extraordinary; he brought serious poetry back to the general reader. Eliot’s famous dictum that contemporary poetry must be difficult had, it seemed, been at least temporarily repealed. There were grumpy complaints, like that of the American critic A. Alvarez who responded to the runaway success of Betjeman’s *Collected Poems* with “the revolution called

‘modern poetry,’ on which all our critical standards are founded, never took place for a huge proportion of the English poetry-reading public. They are still living in some hazy pre-Prufrock Never-Never Land.” What Alvarez and his ilk didn’t acknowledge was that modernist poetry had stubbornly remained the business of an elite, and the contract between the serious writer and the general public had been breached. Betjeman brought them together again. The key to his achievement, perhaps, lies in a belief, as Philip Larkin pointed out, “that poetry is an emotional business, rather than an intellectual and moral one.”

In a better age Betjeman would have found a rich patron. As things stood he had to earn a living, a task he found perpetually onerous. It was not that he was inefficient, though he tried hard to give that impression so as to escape tedious professional and domestic tasks: Hillier says that while he was often called “bumbling,” he could be perfectly businesslike when it suited him. It was simply that he bored too easily and fatally lacked stick-to-itiveness. He worked as a film critic, a freelance book reviewer, an editor, a copywriter for Shell, assistant director of the books division at the British Council—and failed in all these jobs. During the war he worked in the films department at the Ministry of Information (as one of his colleagues remarked, “it says much for the British Civil Service that, in an hour of grave peril for the nation, it has actually been able to find something for John Betjeman to do”), as the British press attaché (some said spy) in neutral Ireland, and in the Admiralty. Again, at none of these ventures was he much use except as a dispenser of charm (not that his employers were ungrateful for this gift). Later, as the most vocal and visible architectural preservationist in England, he served on numerous committees; again, he often turned out to be less useful and successful in this field than his arch-nemesis, Nikolaus Pevsner, the apostle of *Kunstgeschichte*, whose Prussian efficiency and professionalism offended his determined sense of amateurism.

It was not until his histrionic and didactic gifts were discovered by the new medium of television that Betjeman found work that was both congenial and lucrative. He was, as producers and directors immediately observed, a natural: charm, energy, erudition, all directed full force at the audience (“our readers,” as he called him) without a shade of condescension or “talking down.” The programs were produced at the height of his poetic fame, in the wake of the huge sales of *Collected Poems* (1958) and his long autobiographical poem *Summoned by Bells* (1960). Among the classic television documentaries he hosted from the early 1960s on were *The ABC of Churches*, *Pride of Place*, *A Passion for Churches*, *Four with Betjeman*, and the hugely popular *Metroland* (1973). These shows, in the end, did far more for architectural conservation than his previous efforts. As Hillier insists, they “won over the public to Victoriana more effectively than a hundred well-researched works by Pevsner could have done.”

The television appearances confirmed Betjeman in his role as, in the words of some unsympathetic observers, “teddy-bear to the nation.” He was knighted in 1969. (Speaking for thousands, the writer Angus Wilson expressed his congratulations as one who had “attended your adolescent dances, your beach cricket, and wept with you at the Café Royal and the Cadogan Hotel. Long years of rhododendrons and pony clubs to you.”) Three years later he was selected as poet laureate upon the death of Cecil Day Lewis.

The laureateship tends, like the Nobel, to be the kiss of death; the necessity for providing appropriate and, most of all, in-offensive verses upon royal events strangles creativity. “One knows poetry can’t be written to order,” Betjeman said. “One just waits for something to come through from The Management upstairs [God] and The Management can be very capricious.” He failed his first test, Princess Anne’s wedding, badly. One would have thought the courtship of two Olympic riders a natural

subject for Betjeman, but of course no levity was allowed. Trying to squeeze out a poem for the Silver Jubilee was “trauma.” Many began to realize that Betjeman, conservative and royalist though he was, might have been the worst possible choice for laureate.

He was also beginning to suffer the early symptoms of the Parkinson’s Disease that would eventually cripple him. In the 1970s he gave up his flat in the City and moved to Chelsea to be near Elizabeth Cavendish. She, like Penelope, was an extremely controlling type, but unlike Penelope she catered to his needs and comforts. More than one friend thought that Penelope’s neglect of these contributed almost as much to the breakup of the marriage as her 1947 conversion to Roman Catholicism, which had upset him deeply.

Swinging Chelsea in the 1970s was probably the least sympathetic abode Betjeman could have found, and the poet fell prey to anxiety and depression. Moreover, in his last years Betjeman was laid so low by Parkinson’s, strokes, and heart attacks that his peaceful death in 1984—with Archie the teddy-bear and Jumbo the elephant in either arm, and the cat asleep on his stomach—came as a relief to those who loved him. Though he had proved (like so many!) an unsatisfactory laureate, the Establishment sent him out in style with a splendiferous memorial service at Westminster Abbey, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury and with the Prince of Wales reading the lesson. Anthony Powell recorded his impressions of the event in his journal: “One could not help indulging in rather banal reflections about the seedy unkempt (but never in the least unambitious) Betjeman of early days, snobbish objections to him at Oxford, Chetwodes’ opposition to the marriage, crowned at the last by all this boasted pomp and show. It was a remarkable feat.”

Bevis Hillier’s task in recording this feat

has not always been easy. This is an “authorized” biography, and though it is chock-full of marvelous gossip it is clear that Hillier was compelled to be discreet in places; Elizabeth Cavendish, in particular, is treated with kid gloves, and the startling appearance of a second “wife” at Ernest Betjemann’s funeral is never followed up. But Hillier has succeeded in producing, one feels, an essentially honest portrait. Sympathetic but not sycophantic, he communicates both Betjeman’s tremendous charm and also the less agreeable sides to his character. Wisely, he has done this not by quoting the poet’s enemies but his friends, such as Myfanwy Piper. Betjeman, she recalled, approached all human relationships through an idea or an invented situation. “‘Approached’ is perhaps the wrong expression: ‘staved off’ is more like it.”

This concept of “staving off” was echoed by Elizabeth Jane Howard.

He enjoys bouts of willful rapture. There was (I thought) a rather unprepossessing boy/girl who provoked an outburst. “*What* a lovely girl! I thought with those trousers and those freckles she was a boy, but she was a girl! Didn’t you think she was perfectly lovely? I thought she was beautiful,” and so on. I think this is all part of the scheme to keep affectionate laughter going. He is extremely sensitive to other people, and it is his way of having a rest from them.

Generally speaking, he was a better friend than he was a husband, a father, or a son—as so often seems the case with creative artists. The extraordinary receptivity that produces the art becomes hypersensitivity in close relationships. And Betjeman *was* receptive, abnormally so. It is that quality, added to his ear and glorious verbal facility, that made him not just a wonderful light poet or a wonderful minor poet but a wonderful poet, *tout court*.

Rubens at the Metropolitan

by Karen Wilkin

Rubens, I have been told, is an acquired taste. Modern-day viewers, even those with an appetite for the High Baroque, often find him rather over-the-top: the limpid eyes, the ruddy men with bulging biceps and impressive calves, the gleaming armor, the animals doing horrible things to other animals, and—most problematic, it seems, in the era of liposuction—the extra-zaftig nudes. To the dogmatically unconvinced, not even the sheer virtuosity that made Rubens Europe's most sought-after painter of his day can redeem him. It's no good suggesting that they concentrate on the gorgeousness of paint-handling, the inventiveness of composition, or the brilliance with which Rubens could conjure up, for example, the luminosity of flesh with adroitly placed rosy lines; it is all declared to be simply Too Much and categorized as Counter-Reformation propaganda and Baroque histrionics at their most excessive. Since I've been an admirer of Rubens for longer than I care to admit (along with all the rest of the Barnard and Columbia art history students who encountered the great Rubens scholar, the late Julius Held), I think the unconvinced are missing a lot—which is not to say that there isn't ample reason to look critically at the Flemish master's work.

First, there's the question of authenticity. Rubens's enormous success—and the standard practice of the time—meant that his paintings came out of a large workshop filled with a changing population of

talented artists eager to hone their skills under the guidance of the great man. (The phenomenally gifted Anthony Van Dyck remained attached to the workshop long after he had achieved independent master status, to work on some of Rubens's most important commissions.) Rubens conceived the works and often finished them, relying on his bravura brushwork and faultless sense of light and texture to bring studio pieces to life, but clients dissatisfied with works they received often complained that he hadn't "touched" them enough and scholars still wrangle about the degrees of his intervention in many well-known pictures.

There are fewer questions about the fresh, rapidly brushed oil sketches Rubens made to codify ideas, guide his assistants, or give patrons an idea of what to expect. Quite apart from the modern-day appeal of these gestural, slightly incomplete little paintings (in relation to the meticulously finished canvases), they clarify our perceptions of Rubens by offering direct evidence of the master's own astonishingly gifted hand—as was recently made clear by an excellent exhibition of the sketches, "Drawn by the Brush," organized by the Bruce Museum of Arts and Science, Greenwich, Connecticut. In the sketches, Rubens's characteristic, fluent touch becomes more visible; his ways of conceiving figures and his manner of staging dramas, as well as his process of developing an image, all become

evident. The best of them are so complete and so apparently spontaneous that they make the centuries collapse. They make us feel as if we were magically permitted to watch the master at work.

The intimate, revealing oil sketches should convince even skeptics that there are abundant pleasures offered by Rubens, but for the truly hard to convince, there is yet another body of still more intimate, revealing, and often powerful works—his drawings. I suspect that even those most resistant to Rubens's brilliance would capitulate if, for example, they were working their way down the corridor where the pre-Renzo Piano Pierpont Morgan Library routinely installed mouthwatering works from its collections and came upon a masterwork like *Seated Male Youth* (c. 1613), a study for Rubens's painting *Daniel in the Lions' Den*, now in the National Gallery, Washington. The drawing is a tense knot of clasped hands and crossed legs, with sturdy musculature, shining skin, and curling hair suggested by purposeful sweeps and smudges of black chalk and flickers of white. Everything is so compressed, so tightly wound, despite the relaxed assurance of Rubens's virtuoso touch, that we feel certain that if the robust young man stood up, he would explode out of the confines of the paper, into the space we ourselves occupy. It's partly this sense of transcending—or trespassing—the recessive depths of earlier illusionistic painting that gives the best Baroque painting its immediacy. Rubens apparently could achieve it without trying, even when he was testing ideas.

In his lifetime, Rubens carefully kept his drawings together and may have hidden them from outsiders, considering them to be part of the working capital of his large studio, as aids to his own compositions and those of his assistants and as models for younger artists training with him. His will, we are told, "stipulated that they should be passed on to any of his sons or sons-in-law who became a painter," and that only if it became clear, with time, that none of his

children "would become an artist or marry one could the drawings be dispersed." There are both positive and negative results of this thrifty hoarding. On the plus side is the rich array of surviving drawings known today, from all parts of Rubens's career and from all parts of his process. On the minus side is the fact that because of the drawings' private, utilitarian nature, they were never signed or dated—such signatures that exist were usually added by collectors—leaving Rubens scholars with plenty of work to do. Julius Held's *Rubens: Selected Drawings* still remains the standard publication on the subject, but, in the twenty years since it was last enlarged and revised, previously unknown works have come to light, others, previously inaccessible, have been newly studied, and inevitably, new scholarship has resulted in new interpretations, some minor adjustments in dating, and occasional reattributions.

None of this is remarkable. That's what art historians *do*, although it is exciting to learn that as recently as 2000, 360 years after Rubens's death, new drawings were still being identified and at least one work that had languished in obscurity was rediscovered. What is surprising, however, given Rubens's high place in the canon of Western art and his power as a draftsman, is that no major retrospective had ever been devoted to this crucial aspect of his work until this winter's show "Peter Paul Rubens: The Drawings," jointly organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Albertina, Vienna.¹ Even though the organizers of the exhibition point out that the artist himself would probably have strongly disapproved of allowing the public to become privy to the jealously guarded evidence of "his searching, his sweat and toil," we can only be grateful for this terrific show.

1 "Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640): The Drawings" opened at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, on January 15 and remains on view through April 3, 2005. A catalogue of the exhibition has been published by the museum (344 pages, \$65).

More than a hundred drawings, some never seen before in the United States—including several of those recent discoveries—allow us to follow Rubens's entire career, starting with the rather tentative pen and ink biblical scenes he copied from prints as a young apprentice, and culminating in a group of assured, accomplished studies, some sketchy, some highly finished, that record the mature master's thinking in the last decade of his life. Among many other riches is that knockout study for *Daniel in the Lions' Den* from the Pierpont Morgan Library, along with some equally wonderful studies of lions, clearly made from life, for the same picture. The selection (and the interesting catalogue essays and entries) reflects the most current Rubens scholarship, so those still overwhelmed by the sensuality, exuberance, and lushness of the Flemish superstar, even in this most direct and straightforward aspect of his work, can console themselves by concentrating on how much they are learning about Baroque practice and the formation of artists in the first half of the seventeenth century. Yet "Peter Paul Rubens: The Drawings" needs no justification but itself. It is a remarkably pleasurable show full of superb, often surprising works of art. It is also edifying.

We watch Rubens become Rubens. At the Met, the installation helps us to understand some of the context that formed the young painter by including a small selection of prints and illustrated books, all of which he saw and some of which he copied before he traveled to Italy. It's a very *Northern* group of images, with hard outlines, drapery apparently carved from stone, and crabbed faces. Some of that Northern-ness permeates Rubens's earliest drawings, suggesting that he might have been a very different kind of painter had he not spent the years from 1600 to 1608 in Italy, perfecting his already considerable skills—he had qualified as a master in 1598, aged twenty-one—executing commissions for various notables, and studying the great art of antiquity and

of the more recent past. During his Italian sojourn, Rubens studied Michelangelo closely, making drawings of figures on the Sistine Ceiling. He copied antique sculptures, drawing multiple views of works that interested him particularly, such as the much admired group *Centaur Tormented by Cupid* and a standing male figure then known as *The Dying Seneca*, recording his perceptions as he moved around the sculptures. He copied the *Belvedere Torso*, turning his stone model into meaty flesh with his red chalk and gleaming white highlights, and he drew a celebrated antique cameo, intended to be engraved as an illustration for a book on Roman gems. A leaf from a recently discovered set of anatomical studies, in the Met's collection, attests to the thoroughness of his studies. And more.

That the eager, young painter rapidly developed the pictorial amplitude and ease that would be a hallmark of his work for the rest of his life is evident from the exhibition's vigorous compositional studies for biblical and classical themes from the Italian years, many later realized as paintings. At the Met, the selection is breathtaking, some drawings clear and certain, some tentative and searching. Some are full of *pentimenti* that show us Rubens's efforts to find the most eloquent possible combination of bodies, limbs, and gestures to enact a given theme. In some of the earliest, thickened male torsos announce how closely the ambitious Fleming was studying Michelangelo, while suaver, less aggressively modeled bodies suggest the influence of Raphael, sometimes in the same drawing. The Metropolitan's glorious *Susanna* (1607–1611), acquired in 1998, turns the outraged protagonist into a spiraling, light-struck mass of skin and drapery. Angular pen strokes define the cloth with which the startled bather tries to cover her nakedness, while broad patches of wash suggest mass, soft flesh, and motion. A few rapid strokes create the lascivious bearded elder who lunges into the drawing, cropped by its edge. The cumulative impression is of a restless talent. The drawings bear witness to

the boundless energy and the fertile imagination of a young painter who seems barely able to keep pace with his unstoppable flow of ideas.

Back in Antwerp, armed with the prestige of his Italian sojourn, which included a stint as court painter to the Dukes of Mantua, Rubens seemed destined for success. Not only was he an extraordinarily gifted and accomplished painter, but he was also sophisticated, cultivated, and multilingual, with apparently notable diplomatic skills. Equally important, as a resident of Catholic, Spanish-ruled Flanders, a bastion of the “true faith” in the Protestant North, Rubens was ideally positioned to receive the patronage of both the Duchy’s devout rulers and the Counter-Reformation church. Which he did. In 1609 he was appointed court painter to the governors of the Southern Netherlands, Archduke Albert and the Infanta Isabella, and in June 1610, he was awarded his first important religious commission, a triptych of *The Raising of the Cross*, now in Antwerp Cathedral. After that, for the rest of Rubens’s life, greater and greater glory accrued. There were important commissions, diplomatic missions on behalf of the government (which allowed him to study the Titians belonging to the Spanish court in Madrid), international patronage, and all the rest of it. Far from being seen as a mere artisan, a perception artists a century earlier had struggled to overcome, Rubens was indisputably a gentleman, with a great house and studio in town (a Gothic mansion to which he added, in essence, an Italian palazzo), a country estate, an important workshop, and international celebrity. (And yes, there was the toothsome sixteen year old whom Rubens married when he was fifty-three, after the death of his first wife—an apparently very happy and successful union.)

But his drawings reveal that he was first and foremost a dedicated, probing artist. The preparatory studies for his most ambitious religious works record his urgent explorations of facial expressions, gestures, type, character, and anatomy for each of the

protagonists in the drama, all translated into confident, incisive strokes of black chalk, occasionally emphasized with touches of white. Even apparently expedient combinations of disparate images, such as the studies of male and female heads and clasped hands—made at different times, in a thrifty use of precious paper—on single sheet, now in the collection of the Albertina, for *The Raising of the Cross*, have the authority and completeness of, for example, the Morgan’s preparatory drawing for *Daniel in the Lions’ Den*. So does a fabulous chalk and wash rear-view study of an abruptly foreshortened lioness, an unexpected clash of muscular tail, massive haunches, and mighty paws, made for the same painting.

Even as Rubens’s fame grew and he began to travel internationally on diplomatic missions, his working drawings showed no slackening in intensity or excellence. He continued to explore the possibilities of figures and poses for his paintings, as he always had, with the economy, authority, and inventiveness of a virtuoso who revels in his abilities, like a great athlete or a superb dancer at the peak of his powers, but who neither takes those abilities for granted nor wallows in them for their own sake. This subtle tension between what might be called form and substance is perhaps clearest in the section devoted to portraits, which ranges from full-length studies of a Jesuit missionary in Chinese costume and a Korean man, to elegant heads of aristocratic and royal patrons, to delicious images of Rubens’s family. Made, as usual, as preparations for paintings, they are especially unguarded—even the commissioned ones of the nobility—which is not altogether surprising, since they were all made for the painter’s private use or delectation. That Rubens described the First Duke of Buckingham as capricious and arrogant, in a letter written the year he drew his likeness, is suggested by a faint sneer visible through the delicate strokes that evoke the English admiral’s wide eyes, silky beard, moustache,

and wavy hair. Two vigorous, muscular ink and wash drawings of the Second Earl of Arundel, an important collector as well as a political force, convince us of the man's charisma and authority. There wasn't much Rubens could do with Marie de Medici, double-chinned, close to fifty, and famously homely, if we are to believe his drawing in preparation for the great cycle of paintings (now in the Louvre) that she commissioned to glorify her life and controversial reign—although he treated her far more tactfully in the paintings themselves. The real stars of this section are, not unexpectedly, Rubens's affectionate portraits of his family, some apparently done without particular paintings in mind. The selection includes studies of his son Nicolaas at various ages, from the plump-cheeked toddler with the protective coral necklace in a well-known drawing from the Albertina, to the rather stubborn boy in a natty red hat, from the same collection. There's a portrait of Rubens's sister-in-law, his daughter, his second wife, and more. But the most unforgettable may be the British Museum's deservedly renowned drawing of his first wife, Isabella Brant, a masterpiece of both technique and characterization. The orchestration of marks with red, white, and black chalk at once celebrates the medium, the artist's hand, and Rubens's ability to transform materials into luminous skin, rebellious hair, and sheer *personality*. Isabella confronts the viewer; she seems lively, intelligent, a little quizzical, someone, you suspect, who knew her own mind and kept her own counsel. The drawing is a near-miracle of transparency and perception.

Among the exhibition's many high points is a delightful section devoted to "Farm Life and Landscapes"—studies probably made from life at one of the farms Rubens inherited from his mother. An imposing ox was attracting a lot of attention on my last visit to the show, but my preference is for

an astonishing landscape: a lakeside row of trees and their reflections, seemingly smudged onto the paper and yet rigorously specific. A few streaks of orange chalk evoke the setting sun, alluded to in a brief inscription by Rubens. Constable or Corot would have been proud to have made a drawing that managed to be at once this sparse and this atmospheric. And then there is the British Museum's sheet of studies of dancing peasants for a painting of a Kermis, dated 1630–1636. Like an inspired choreographer, Rubens explores how many ways a couple can embrace, spiral, step, duck, face, turn away, and kiss, all without letting go of one another's hands. That he does so with rapid, improvisatory pen sketches—a series of minimally outlined figures, many subject to visible revisions and overlays—makes this drawing one of the most illuminating and fascinating in the exhibition.

As installed at the Met, "Peter Paul Rubens: The Drawings" ends with a crescendo of late drawings ranging from one highly finished chalk nude that seems breathed onto the page to a gouache and ink allegory of war and peace so loose and energetic that it seems to point to expressionism. Most dramatic, perhaps, are the large studies for Rubens's opulent vision of the Garden of Love—the painting is in the Prado—a series of chalk drawings of elegantly clad men and women being perfectly charming to one another, all rendered with dazzling patches of scribbled tone, firm hatching, and bold, space-hungry strokes. The images are appealing, the orchestration of darks and lights convincing, and the touch compelling. As we gaze, as with the best of Rubens's oil sketches, the intervening centuries become irrelevant and we feel as if somehow we were being allowed to watch these private masterworks as they were created—to be made witness to the master's process. As I said, "Peter Paul Rubens: The Drawings" is a terrific show. Julius Held would have loved it.

The difficult justice of Melville & Kleist

by *Martin Greenberg*

There is an old Venetian folk story about a peasant who searched and searched for a just person to be his newborn child's godfather. At last he met up with the Lord. "I need to baptize this little child, but I want a just person for his godfather," he said. "Are you just?" Embarrassed, the Lord hesitated in his reply: "Well, you see, to tell the truth, not really." "Then you can't be my boy's godfather," the peasant said and went on till he encountered Our Lady. She too when asked if she were just, blushed, and said she couldn't in good conscience claim so much. Finally the father encountered a lady dressed in black. "Yes, I believe I am a just person," was her answer. The infant's parents were overjoyed and the baptism duly took place with feasting and merrymaking. When the last guest had departed, the Signora Godmother invited the father into her palazzo and conducted him into a great hall in which many little flames were burning. The peasant halted in astonishment. "Godmother, what are all those little flames?" The Signora replied: "Those are the lights of all the souls of men. Look, will you, at that one there that's weak and on the point of going out? That's your little flame. There's almost no oil left in the lamp. And will you look at that one there burning bright and strong? That one is your little son's." The peasant trembled with fear. "Godmother," he begged her, "take a little drop of oil, would you, from my baby's lamp and put it into mine?"—"No," the Signora Godmother replied, "I am a just person: I am Death."

Very profound, the tale is. And buried in it is a silent laugh. There is no justice on earth, it says, nor in heaven neither, you fool. Is the story cynical? Yes, in an old Italian way. But in an old Italian way it isn't, for there is justice, after all, in death. Heaven is a church territory in the story, a kind of papal state, not really something on the other side of the phenomenal world, not a mystery. What is a mystery is death. Since death is a mystery, so, ultimately, is justice. Which explains a lot by not explaining.

It is no news that justice is not an easy matter. Creon, King of Thebes, banging his fist down in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, says that whatever the ruler does is just, even when it is unjust. Such an idea of justice, which has never lost its currency, makes no sense, or rather it makes only too obvious sense: Don't argue with the justice of the ruler. Antigone's argument for disobeying Creon's order forbidding the burial of her brother Polyneices, who had warred against Thebes, is that the order did not come from Zeus above or the gods below. Neither "Creon nor any mortal man may overrule the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws," which since time immemorial commanded burial of the dead. The divine law is clear enough and becomes clear to Creon too, belatedly, after Teiresias gives him a talking-to.

The Chorus respects Antigone's piety, but you don't defy power so, they say. The bit priggish Antigone defends herself against the charge of overweeningness in a most

surprising way. If it were her own dead child, or its dead father, she would have let the corpse moulder away rather than defy Creon's command. One husband gone, she might have found another, got another child to replace the lost one—but with her parents dead, there was no replacing her brother. The passage has been a stumbling block to commentators. It appears from it that the “unfailing” higher law is not so absolute as otherwise it is represented in the play, that it is subject to qualification—to us a very bizarre qualification.

Justice is a theme of much Greek tragedy, justice religiously-philosophically considered. This is often true, too, of Shakespearean drama. With Shakespeare, who has a positive dislike for absolutes, qualifications multiply, limits are set: “immoderate” authority, acting the god, tyrannizes; immoderate “liberty plucks justice by the nose.” Yet it is still the case with him, as Hamlet says, “Offense’s gilded hand may shove by justice . . . but ’tis not so above.” With some exceptions—notably Kleist, Ibsen, and Kafka—justice philosophically considered doesn’t figure prominently in the European literature of the last two centuries. Issues of justice, and especially of social justice and law, are everywhere to be found in the great European novels, but not ideas, or intimations, which cast back (or down, or up—or around) for an ultimate source of our sense of right. Proust, too, in at least one notable passage, muses about how we come into this world already burdened by obligations—to be good, kind, considerate, scrupulous, oh, many things—which nothing on this earth imposes on us, which seems to belong to a different world, based on “laws which every profound work of intellect brings us nearer to and which are invisible only (were it only!) to fools.”

In American literature we have an outstanding example of a philosophical narrative which looks up yearningly from the platform of earth to a different world whose injunctions to goodness, kindness, justice are indeed traced in our hearts—but impotently.

It is Melville’s *Billy Budd*. The troubling case recounted in that story is firmly resolved. Nevertheless the resolution leaves all concerned in a state of agitation: characters, readers and (you feel) the writer of the story himself. In the stories and plays of the ever surprising Prussian poet Heinrich von Kleist, born four decades before our American Melville but like him in being a dialectician, only more so, justice philosophically considered is a constant theme. In his extraordinary novella *Michael Kohlhaas* justice seems impossible to arrive at, so tangled the situation of its eponymous protagonist becomes. But in the end, involved and complicated though it is, justice is done and a calmness ensues. There is nothing of the uneasiness, the smothered protest, the confusion that troubles *Billy Budd*. Both Melville and Kleist are realists, but realist-romancers (as after them Kafka is). Some such combination of realism and romance is needed for the modern imagination to tell a story that reaches beyond the phenomenal world.

Melville is an exasperating writer. He can write so powerfully, even sublimely. How *Moby-Dick* catches you at the start, with Ishmael and his November-filled soul standing at the tip of Manhattan Island looking out to sea from the Battery—then with him in New Bedford at the Spouter Inn together in bed “like a married couple” with that noblest of savages, the wonderful Queequeg, waking to find the harpooner’s “arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner.” What a scene! And what a business, practical and metaphysical, he makes of whales and whaling! He can write so well and ill, like Theodore Dreiser and others after him. D. H. Lawrence said that on the American continent the life-force is more powerful than consciousness “and so is never gracefully expressed”; it prompts a “savage desire to go to extremes,” extremes of violence, extremes of idealism.

Billy Budd goes to an extreme of perverted idealism. It is Melville’s last work and much praised by critics. Murdering idealisms have never lacked for praise. It is powerfully written, in his clumsy way—the power and the

clumsiness being one special voice—with a plentiful laying on of signs and wonders. We all know that Melville was the great naysayer. About Hawthorne (and about himself) he had written in 1851: “He says NO! in thunder.” To what? To the cheerful American shallowness which would smile away everything that is dark and deep, “the blackness of darkness”—evil. Solzhenitsyn when he lived in Vermont asked: “Why do Americans smile so all the time?” For one, because we’re so glad we aren’t poor, as most of the world is. We love our materialism, which provides us a decent if uninspiring well-being. But Melville hated it. And America doesn’t care for him and his world-wandering *Pequod*, with its crazy captain commanding its capable mates—tragical madness commanding reason. Our preferred vessel is the Good Ship Lollipop.

Melville’s cry was (it needed Lawrence to supply the words): *Delenda est Chicago!* But thirty-five years and more later, it was time for his *nunc dimittis*, time to depart life with some mellowing word of acceptance, of reconciliation, an offering of faith in the existence of human goodness. That word is *Billy Budd*—or so it has been claimed.

The story is both a tale and a fable. The tale is simple in its scene and elements—a ship and its crew—with a strong politico-historical dimension. The fable is simpler. The time is one of great upheaval, 1797, and Britain is at war with Revolutionary France. She has recently suppressed two mutinies by her much abused naval seamen. The seventy-four-gun H.M.S. *Bellipotent* stops the Scottish merchantman *The Rights of Man* (the Scots were inclined to radicalism) and presses into the British Navy the Handsome Sailor Billy Budd, a welkin-eyed innocent whose natural goodness had spread a halcyon calm and kindness among his rough-neck shipmates. When Billy is being rowed off into the King’s service, the satirical-allegorical author has his unsatirical prelapsarian innocent cry out, “Goodbye to you, old *Rights of Man!*”

Goodbye indeed. There are no rights of

man, and few rights of any kind, in His Majesty’s service. The endearing Billy still proves endearing aboard the *Bellipotent*, though in that floating war society his innocence evokes sardonic smiles among experienced hands. And that world provides, like the great world itself, a Satan, harsher than his harsh name of Claggart, as sinisterly handsome as Billy is angelically—modeled on Milton’s Satan, despairing like him, but ignoble. He is the Master-at-Arms, the policeman of the ship, the Adversary. He hates Billy. It is “an antipathy spontaneous and profound . . . called forth by harmlessness itself.” He also hates him for finding himself attracted by Billy’s good looks and happy temper. Claggart plots against the youth, denouncing him to the Captain as a mutineer. Billy is called in to answer Claggart. But Nature’s innocent has one imperfection: he stutters “under strong provocation of heart-feeling.” The stutter becomes a tongue-tied convulsion when face to face with his accuser.

Captain Vere (i.e., Captain Truth) bristles with instant dislike of the Master-at-Arms, instant doubt of his accusation. Paternally, he tells the youth to take his time, speak when he is able. Afflicted more by the kindness, tongue-tied Billy answers only as he can: his fist shoots out and strikes Claggart, strikes him dead. “Fated boy,” breathed Captain Vere.” The disciplinarian supplants the father: “Struck dead by an angel of God! yet the angel must hang!”

Early in the novella Melville had cited Billy’s stutter as a “striking instance” of the fact that Satan, “the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet,” even with one so innocent as the Handsome Sailor. But how can Billy’s helpless imperfection of speech be construed as the taint of primordial evil? Isn’t it an imperfection of nature? For Melville to call the stutter evidence of the universal badness, was carelessly (or malignly) to bring his philosophy of fallen man (as much a soured humor as philosophy) into his farewell work. I say carelessly, because when the tongue-tied

youth kills the Master-at-Arms, it should have followed from that philosophy that the blow prompted by the foretopman's speech defect was Satanic—not angelic, as Captain Vere, as the whole story declares. But maybe it wasn't carelessness. Billy's imperfection, the early passage had ended by saying, proved that he was no "conventional hero" and that the novella was "no romance," that Melville's idealistic fiction was no idealistic fiction. Late nineteenth-century America was awash in cheap literary idealism. Did he wish to contradict in advance any association of his fiction with such stuff—at the cost of some moral confusion?

Captain Vere is held up as a model officer, absolutely faithful to his "vows of allegiance to martial duty." Abnegating his most compassionate, human feelings, he urges the officers of the drumhead court to impose a sentence of death on the foretopman, though all agree, and Captain Vere first of all, that he was falsely charged by Claggart. Why is the Captain so resolute to hang the angel of God? Because the heavenly justice executed by Billy on the false accuser, being on earth, in the Navy, the raising of a hand against a superior officer, is a capital offense, never mind its circumstances.

The officers of the court find themselves in a state of "troubled indecision." Why should Budd be hanged, who "purposed neither mutiny nor homicide"? If convicted, wasn't it still possible to "mitigate the penalty"? The Captain, who is cast in the role of a patient explainer to those inferior to him in strength of intellect and moral austerity, has two answers to these questions.

You may ask how, he says, we can condemn to "shameful death a fellow creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?" He too feels "the full force of that. It is Nature." But "a resolute mind" is needed to overcome such natural feelings. For the buttons they wear attest their allegiance to the King, not to Nature. Commissioned as King's officers, they "ceased to be natural free agents." In condemning Billy, *they* don't condemn; the "martial law operating

through" them does. "For that law and the rigor of it, we are not responsible." As Stephen Vizinczey writes in *Truth and Lies in Literature*, with plain speaking breaking down the wall of portentousness that has protected the story, "This is what later became known as the Nuremberg defense."

Nor is it only the heart which is dismayed by convicting innocent Billy, Captain Vere continues; one's conscience is, too. "But tell me whether or not, occupying the position we do, private conscience should not yield to that imperial one" under whose code we serve? He does not say where one's private conscience is from. He does say that "at the Last Assizes," there, Billy shall be acquitted. You may understand him to mean God, or not. Melville himself quarrelled with God. Conscience's source is mysterious. But wherever it is from, down here below in the imperial world it is an embarrassment. If we should act on earth as the heart urges and conscience commands, all order and discipline would be imperiled, French Revolutions never cease, nor naval mutinies. *Fiat iustitia*, the ancient maxim says, *pereat mundus*. Just you let justice be done, the Captain in effect argues, and then see how the world would indeed perish!

His second argument, his ace in the hole, I would call it, for so he conceives it, is: mutiny, the fear of it. Its danger to the *Bel-lipotent*, because of the revolutionary times and recent mutinies, he emphasizes heavily. Anything less than hanging, Captain Vere tells the unhappy court, would be a sign of fear. The "people" [crew] know very well what "our naval usage and tradition" are. "Your clement sentence they would account pusillanimous. . . . What shame to us . . . and how deadly to discipline." From wounded discipline the next step would be rebellion. The order of the H.M.S. *Bel-lipotent*, ship of war that is the world, necessitates the hanging an innocent man.

The drumhead court, still troubled in mind, convicts reluctantly. The thoughtful Captain Vere confides the verdict to thoughtless Billy. "[E]ach," it is said, "radically sharing in the rarer qualities of our

nature,” submits to authority’s higher necessity. The two are imagined as embracing like father and son, like Jacob and Isaac, in the privacy of the sailor’s confinement, where, as if it were a sacred precinct, the storyteller doesn’t venture to enter. Each experiences a sacrificial exaltation: Billy, sacrificing his life at the behest of the father-god of his world, exclaims “God bless Captain Vere!” just before he drops from the yardarm; the Captain, as the one who condemns to death, makes the even harder sacrifice (according to the narrator) at the behest of *his* father-god, the King. It’s an old, old lie—that the hangman suffers more than the hanged, the commander more than the commanded. (World War I in the next century mocked it out of existence, but perhaps not forever.) Not only is Billy likened to Isaac, he is likened to Christ: “A chip of the spar” from which Billy was hanged, to the “people” was “as a piece of the Cross.”

What confusion! Heaven reached down powerfully and stayed Jacob’s hand. The all-powerful Father on high, intervening, sent down his only son to save mankind. But God, or the gods, or heaven, or the beyond—they are as powerless as Nature against the injustice of civilized law in Melville’s story. All the other world can do is signal Billy’s innocence by the Lamb-like glory of the fleecy vapor of the dawn in which he is hanged, by the corpse’s perfect immobility at the end of the rope, by the sea birds croaking a requiem over his watery burial spot.

In the Venetian folk tale I began with, the justice of death, of the mysterious beyond, defies the injustice of the world in which even the Lord and Our Lady are implicated. Death in *Billy Budd* lacks all defiance. At the heart of the story is the debate between conscience’s truth and the King’s truth—a rigged debate. The officers of the court, moved by compassion and an uneasy conscience, wish to sentence accordingly. But their voice in the deliberations counts for nothing. Captain Vere both presents the case for lenience and refutes it. Like the

ship, the debate is entirely in his hands. Still unpersuaded by him as to the law of the matter, the officers are awed by him into assent, and persuaded, too—by the need to strike fear into the “people’s” souls by hanging Billy whether he is guilty or not.

Behind the story’s determined martial front, it quakes with uncertainty. Captain Vere dies from wounds received in a battle in which he defeats a French ship of the line named the *Atheist*. His last murmured words are “Billy Budd, Billy Budd.” Melville hastens to add it isn’t remorse speaking. We see how an author can lie about his own story in his own story! What else but remorse do you hear in those words? The avowed/denied remorse, the crew’s smothered protest, the pity for poor Billy that overwhelms the ending of the story—all this clashes silently with the absolute martial law and military necessity that Captain Vere is at such pains to defend. The result is moral incoherence.

Melville was appalled, in his poem “The House Top,” by “the Atheist roar of [the] riot[s]” against the draft in New York in 1863, by the corruption of the Roman virtue of the Republic by money after the Civil War, by the downfall of patrician culture signified by the failure of *Moby-Dick* to interest a vulgar demos which preferred the effusions of sentimental lady novelists. The man who said NO! in thunder in 1851 had said in his next words that “all men who say yes, lie.” In *Billy Budd* he was driven to say yes, reluctantly, so as to preserve from anarchical destruction what Captain Vere calls “the forms, the measured forms.”

Atheism for Melville meant all-destroying French Revolutions, naval mutinies, and draft riots. But there was another kind of atheism as well: Creon’s declaring that you don’t argue with the justice of the King “when it is right, and even when it is not”—Captain Vere’s Nuremberg defense, his justification of overriding military necessity. Against such atheism the mysterious gods uphold a justice known to our conscience, a justice acknowledged in the Captain’s dying words. These contradict,

confusingly, the elderly *yes* that Melville says to draconian justice, the hanging justice of the Draco he calls “wise” in his poem about the draft riots.

Kleist’s *Michael Kohlhaas*, too, like *Billy Budd*, has an historical setting, the sixteenth century of Luther and the peasant wars. But the epochal feeling of Kleist’s own time of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man also enters into it, in the character of Kohlhaas as an individual more citizenlike than subject insisting on the justice due him. Early in his troubles he tells his wife Lisbeth that he has no wish “to go on living in a country where they won’t protect me in my rights. I’d rather be a dog, if they are going to kick me, than a man!” You hear in his words a very different accent from anything in *Billy Budd*—the accent of freedom. Nobody is free in our American’s story; Kohlhaas vehemently asserts his freedom in the Prussian’s.

Billy Budd is a fable dressed up as a story. A fable is constructed with the goal of its conclusion always before it. A story happens, and must find the way to its conclusion. *Michael Kohlhaas*, no construction, unfolds with the naturalness of life, with the details, the complications, the surprises of life (and also of supernatural life). What is not natural about it is its idiosyncratic, radically hypostatic style. But that is no dispraise. Hard as steel, surcharged with matter, contorted and complex (as Thomas Mann describes it), it is a style that drives Kleist’s narratives along at headlong speed thanks to the compression achieved by a syntax which can pack a succession of actions, considerations, and reflections into its subordinative structure.

Much of the story’s matter, as in so much Kleist, is dialectical: argument and counter-argument. His imagination was a restless, reasoning one. The world for him was a question he could never stop turning over in his head. So it is with *Michael Kohlhaas*—one long question, in its case about what is justice. The striking first sentence about the Brandenburg horse dealer Michael Kohlhaas

declares that he was “one of the most upright and at the same time one of the most terrible men of his day.” His character (like Kleist’s Prince of Homburg, Count F— in *The Marquise of O—* and others) embraces opposed moral extremes—unnaturally, according to the old rationalist psychology, only too naturally according to the Dostoyevskian psychology Kleist anticipates. There would have been “every reason,” so we are told, “to bless Kohlhaas’s memory, if he had not carried one virtue to excess. But his sense of justice turned him into a brigand and a murderer.” If a too scrupulous sense of justice can do that, then justice is indeed no easy matter.

Crossing into Saxony one day to sell horses at the Leipzig fair, Kohlhaas is stopped at the Tronka Castle tollgate and two of his string are illegally detained by the Junker Wenzel von Tronka. When he returns to collect them, they are skin and bones from overwork, and Herse, the groom he had left behind to care for them, has been chased away. All his attempts to obtain legal redress are blocked by the Tronka influence. The worst failure is an attempt by Kohlhaas’s wife Lisbeth to appeal personally to the Saxon Elector, which costs her her life. Dying, she urges her husband to forgive his enemies.

“May God never forgive me the way I forgive the Junker!” is his unspoken reply. Claiming an “inborn authority,” he sends the Junker an ultimatum, which is laughed at—whereupon he falls on Tronka Castle with a handful of men and burns it to the ground. The narrator—or one should say the text, the words are so impersonal—comments as if from on high: “In such fashion does the angel of judgment descend from heaven.” Of course this isn’t suggesting Kohlhaas is an angel of God (as it is suggested about Billy in Melville’s story). But it does say he is an instrument of an angel, the fiery sword of Michael (whose viceroy with half-demented fanaticism he subsequently claims literally to be). This first action of the “terrible” Kohlhaas, called a judgment from heaven, is at the same time the action of man thirsting for revenge. It should make us uneasy. Jus-

tice is a practice of reason. A prohibition going back to remotest times condemns unreasoning revenge; that is the meaning of Jehovah's reserving it to himself. Yet we don't feel uneasy when Kohlhaas attacks. We exult—the side of justice, virtue, goodness is striking back at last. But the exultation suffers a check almost at once when with loud whoops the men Kohlhaas commands heave out of the castle windows the corpses not only of the castellan and the steward but also of their wives and children. Justice may be from heaven, but is it the case that, passing through the hands of men as it must, it inevitably punishes the innocent with the guilty?

The Junker manages to escape, and the horse dealer in pursuit publishes a high-sounding “Kohlhaas Manifesto” declaring that the war he is waging against him is a righteous one. The argument he makes for this to Martin Luther later in the story is: having been denied the law's protection, he is an outcast from it and free to act for himself. It is a defensible argument, Luther reluctantly allows; the horse dealer's war has its justice. In just wars, as we well know from our own day, it is not only the evil side that destroys terribly; the just side does too. This doesn't mean an equality, only that justice may and often does entail injustice. So the answer to my question above is yes. Which is why pacifists reject all wars, absolutely. But absolutism is a refuge in the clouds from the uncertainties and incompatibilities of practical reason.

Heaven speaks for Kohlhaas. When he orders a convent that had sheltered the Junker put to the torch, it speaks against him by loosing a lightning bolt at his feet. Thanks to his military victories and “the clink of his gold,” his handful of men swells into a band of murderous freebooters and peasants whose main interest is plunder. His sense of himself as an arm of justice swells too, into the mad conviction that he has been divinely called to punish with fire and sword not only the Junker but the whole lying world as well, and to build a better one—so he proclaims

grandiosely in another manifesto, signed, “at the seat of Our Provisional World Government.” He surely causes the higher powers much anxiety.

At the height of his military successes and messianic delusion, a public notice denouncing him as a bloodthirsty revenger, signed by Luther, brings him to his senses. The shaken Kohlhaas pays Luther a nocturnal visit. In the ensuing debate the angry reformer admonishes him about the God-granted authority of princes which he has defied. But having conceded the horse dealer's grievance was justified, Luther agrees to intercede for him with the Elector of Saxony—but not with God by granting him the communion he begs for. For that Kohlhaas must first forgive the Junker. In anguish he refuses. His being repeatedly urged to forgive and his always refusing (with one exception) is an essential fact in understanding his character and the justice the story arrives at. Kohlhaas's defining virtue is his integrity, his acute sense of right. To give up his claim to justice would be to give himself up, give up self. The saintly give up self; Kohlhaas is no saint. But the revenge he pursues implacably—doesn't that seriously taint his virtue? No, I don't think so. Because for all his feelings of vengefulness, his demands don't in fact go beyond a narrowly limited justice: his pair of blacks restored to him in their original condition, the belongings of his man Herse, who subsequently fell in battle, returned to his mother, and the Junker punished.

Thanks to Luther, Kohlhaas comes to Dresden a free man, under an immunity, to pursue his case against the Junker. But the Saxon officials turn the guard that has been placed at his disposal bit by bit into jailers. “In the despair and anguish of his soul,” the horse dealer agrees to a scoundrelly follower's secret proposal to rescue him. The scheme is detected and the horse dealer is condemned to be tortured to death and quartered by knackers' men. At this juncture the Elector of Brandenburg, critical of the Saxon proceedings against one of his sub-

jects, intervenes and has Kohlhaas brought to Berlin for trial before the Imperial court.

The piling up of incidents and circumstances, making for what seemed a hopeless legal confusion, threw Kohlhaas into despair. For Kleist the way of justice lay through despair. Perhaps the way of justice always does. But now, suddenly, there is an intervention of the supernatural into the story. There have been a few signs already of its interest in the horse dealer's fate—which is no surprise in a storyteller always ready to see a shadow from the other side falling on this one. However, the old gypsy fortuneteller closely resembling Kohlhaas's dead wife who suddenly appears is no shadow but a solid presence, supernatural but not at all ghostly. She singles out the horse dealer from among a crowd of spectators in a village square to give him a piece of paper, sealed in a capsule, in which is foretold the downfall of the Saxon house. "Get it from him, from that one," she tells the frantic Elector.

The prince offers to help Kohlhaas escape in exchange for the capsule. He refuses, denouncing the dishonest, dishonorable way he was treated in Dresden. The Elector "can send me to the scaffold, but I can make him suffer, and I mean to." His refusal to forgive the hated Junker is one thing. But what does it mean that he should choose death over life so as to make the Elector suffer?

Kohlhaas is tried in Berlin and condemned to death for breach of the public peace. At the same time he is vindicated in his action against the Junker Wenzel von Tronka and his three demands of justice granted. The desperate Saxons hire an old crone to masquerade as the gypsy woman and get him to entrust the paper to her. But the old crone is the very gypsy woman she is hired to impersonate, and puts him on his guard. Nevertheless her counsel is: accept the Elector's original offer and live. Not for the world, is his reply. Not for the world, yes, she says, but for the pretty little boy she is holding in her lap. Still he refuses; he will not give up the "bit of writing through which satisfaction has been given me so wonder-

fully for all that I have suffered." The old woman, by every indication his dead wife Lisbeth and so an emissary from beyond the grave, who had died urging him to forgive his enemies, gives way. Again in the debate between an unshakable Kohlhaas and an uncertain heaven, the former prevails.

Michael Kohlhaas has been criticized for departing from the straight path of its realism into fairytale supernaturalism. I did so myself, in the introduction to my 1960 translation of the work. A gross misapprehension! It was to read the story with novelistic expectations. But it isn't a novel; the nineteenth-century realistic novel was still on its way. It is a *novella* which, as Goethe said, is a story full of a lot of strange goings-on (*gar vieles wunderliche Zeug*). All the while one's head judged the strangeness of its last part adversely, one's unlistened-to feelings said, "*That's right, that's right!*" That the gypsy woman and her prophetic paper were an afterthought is evident just from the text. But what of it? Kleist's afterthought fulfills the story by sublimating a limited question of legal justice into a transcendental (ultimate) one.

Without the gypsy woman and her gift to Kohlhaas, where should there have been the "extraordinary man" we are told about at the story's start, the justice figure of the end? The magical paper gives Kohlhaas the freedom to choose, and by doing so "renders visible what is otherwise invisible but nonetheless real: his inner freedom" (Stephen Vizinczey). And he chooses death. Escaping would have meant abandoning his suit against the Junker and forfeiting the justice his soul has thirsted for more than anything on earth, and giving the ignominious prince possession of awful knowledge no mortal has a right to, as Kohlhaas understands. For only just before he stoops his head to the axe does he unseal the amulet and read the paper himself—which he then swallows before the fainting Elector.

In a letter Kleist wrote ten years before his suicide, he said about death and freedom (having just feared for his life in a storm on the Rhine):

Oh, there is nothing more repulsive than the fear of death. Life is the one possession that is worth something only if you are indifferent to it. How abject it is not to be able to relinquish it without a struggle—only a man who is able to cast it aside easily and joyfully can make it serve great ends. A man who has too much care of it is, morally speaking, already dead, for the highest power of his life, which is his ability to lay it down, decays in the degree that he is solicitous of it.

The nature that compels us to cling to life, the law-bound phenomenal life, enslaves. This absence of freedom, for Kleist, is not the negativity, the nothing, of the abstraction called determinism. Living, *actual* living, is living morally, willy-nilly; to bow to necessity is to die morally, which is not nothing. By choosing to die, the horse dealer serves the “great end” of justice. He becomes as it were the “just person” of the Italian folk story who is Death.

Justice is done and the novella ends in a kind of numinous glow. Or as Richard Kuhns vividly puts it in his book *Tragedy*, “The closing scene flashes with the presence of uncanny powers.” All is strange, all is wonderful. On arriving in Berlin, Kohlhaas had been lodged in a prison reserved for knights. Though charged as a criminal, the state recognizes in him a dignity beyond the law, a law beyond the law. He receives a letter from Luther by the hand of Jacob Freising, and from the latter the Holy Communion he has longed for. He is condemned to an honorable rather than a felon’s death. He rejoices in the return of his pair of blacks, restored as if by magic to plump and shining creatures pawing the ground spiritedly, in the return of Herse’s belongings, in learning the Junker has been condemned to two years’ imprisonment. Kohlhaas goes to his death rejoicing. Justice always has something wonderful about it: that what wasn’t right, that stood there immovable as a mountain, should be made right after all, the mountain removed.

Everything happens in *Billy Budd* as it must and the most anybody can do is say,

alas. Had Melville lost all confidence in human freedom? The collaboration of a hanging judge with an innocent youth in a judicial murder, he idealizes as loving resignation, a holy martyrdom—yet uneasily, remorse creeping in unacknowledged. Had he lost confidence, too, in political freedom, in American democracy? The crew of the *Bellipotent* are called, democratically, the “people.” They are full of compassion for Billy. But unless disciplined by the lash and the noose, they are feared for that very reason as a mutinous mob ready to overthrow the “measured forms” of the social order. Did Melville feel uneasy as an American when he found himself questioning the American Revolution and the American confidence in the people? Is that why he placed his story aboard a British vessel—although the incident it is based on (mentioned in the novella) happened aboard an American one in 1842, with a cousin of his presiding over the court that hanged three men as mutineers?

Who has the last word in the story? The crew, the ordinary seamen, speaking as the people, not as a mob, who lend Billy *his* last word in their ballad “Billy in the Darbies”:

—But aren’t it all a sham?

A blur’s in my eyes; it is dreaming that I am.

A hatchet to my hawser? all adrift to go?

The drum roll to grog, and Billy never know?

In *Michael Kohlhaas* justice is no sham—it is an exercise of transcendental freedom. Kleist’s reading of Kant in his youth is a famous episode in German literary history; it plunged him into despair about the possibility of truth. But may we see Kant as an encouraging influence for the later Kleist, behind *Michael Kohlhaas*? The horse dealer is a self-determining spirit, a self able to act freely out of his own self-determination.

The end of the novella leaves the great Saxon prince shattered in body and soul. Kohlhaas’ posterity on the other hand thrives, and “some hale and hearty descendants of his were still living in Mecklenburg in the last century.”

Three poems from “The Sugar Mile” *by Glyn Maxwell*

This man—me—walks into a pub on Broadway in the golden early September of 2001, opens his notebook on the bar, and starts trying to write a poem. My work is interrupted by an old man called Joey Stone, who laughs to see me crossing out words. He tells me he is there to mark a significant date. It is sixty-one years to the day since “Black Saturday,” the first mass daylight bombing of London, the onset of what became known as the Blitz. Joey had noticed I was British, and thought I’d know this stuff. But I don’t, and I say no more for the rest of *The Sugar Mile*. It is a book of other voices.

Joey settles into his chair by the window, and, as the beer and the sunny afternoon begin to send him towards sleep, memories come. Over the course of the weekend, as he wakes or dozes, as the barman Raul clears up around him, chatting about the English, or girls, or the glories of New York, and as this man—me—sits silently at the bar, Joey relives those terrible three days, which will culminate in the worst incident of civilian loss of life suffered by the British in the war.

Joey was fifteen and delivered papers to a family called the Prays. Their father worked at Tate and Lyle, one of the great sugar factories clustered near the docklands. When their home is destroyed on Black Saturday, the family is evacuated to a school. Joey is fascinated by the sisters Sally and Julie (the latter struck dumb by what’s happened), friendly with the elder brother Harry, and barely tolerated by the younger brother Robby—who never lets Joey forget he is half-Italian and therefore “the enemy.” He follows them to their shelter in the school. There they wait for the three London buses that, they have been promised, will carry them to the safety of rural England.

Two days and nights go by, there’s no sign of the buses, the bombs rain down around them, and London burns. Huddled together with hundreds of others in a few classrooms, the Prays and Joey try to keep their spirits up, gossiping, telling stories, imagining the countryside—a place they have never seen—imagining a life after this, a future. Gradually, Joey’s memories reveal one beautiful secret in a wilderness of ruin.

—Glyn Maxwell

Harry dealing cards

Put it this way. If I had a suitcase
I'd open it and I might iron my shirt
but I certainly wouldn't put my socks in drawers
because unlike you kids

I can't be wasting time on a ruddy farm
at my age. Have to do my bit. Eighteen
in April don't forget. I'll stay a night
and eat a roast with you

and get you settled down. When you next see me
I'll be in uniform. I'm not sure which.
I may well have a beard. Why is that funny?
All very well laughing

when it's summer all year long. Not in the service.
Our lads are copping it every night and day
over our heads right now, don't you forget it,
kiddies. Spades are trumps.

Robby stretching his legs

First thing I'm gonna do is swipe a car
and get myself back here. Course I can drive.
It's easy, a girl could do it. An Italian
girl could do it, couldn't you Joey? First thing.

Second thing, hook up with the Upton gang.
Do a little business, coin a phrase,
waste not want not, dig for victory
blah blah blah. Move up west. Next thing.

Next thing, well. Meet an American starlet.
They have them in their army, not starlets,
females, and their army's going to come,
I heard a rumour if we're in a hole.

This? This ain't a hole. This school's a hole
but we were just unlucky. Took a hit.
Like Mr Albie Rogers is pretending
happened to his house. And you, Jew-seppy,

what are you, vapour trail? We ain't in a hole.
Our boys'll see off Adolf. If we don't,
the stars of the United States, I tell you,
they're trained and they fight dirty, they're luscious.

Sally playing Patience

It's even got a cinema
the farmers like to go there
Joey, then they smoke cigars
they have a film discussion
in a room with velvet fittings.

But what nobody tells them
as nobody tells anyone
is all the famous actors
and all the leading ladies
Robby you can think of

have also been escorted
to the villages selected.
No one's saying much about it
Joey but these stars
in costumes and disguises

could pass us on the meadow
or you could be hop-picking
Joey did you ever
and next to you right there there's
Merle Oberon, who knows,

Harry, and all the Hammers
are operating tractors,
people with great talents
are all to be protected
Julie for the future

so there'll still be the pictures
to go to when it's over
and cups to play for Harry
and parties and by that time
some of them will know us

you'll stand there with your wineglass
you don't have to be famous
but they know you, you were there, Joey
side by side at harvest
when stars were nothing special.

Julie, in the wheat barns
at midnight when the work's done
anyone could stand there
meaning what you hope's
their meaning. When it's over

everyone who went there
will have this bond forever
and we'll bring our children out there
in cars with silver streamlines
for the grand reunion dancing.

The irresistible rise of Trevor who?

by John Gross

There is going to be a general election in Britain later this year, and in preparation for the campaign the Labour party has appointed a new advisor to take charge of its advertising—someone it must have judged particularly well equipped to articulate its vision and popularize its ideals. The job went to Trevor Beattie.

Trevor who? No, not many people in Britain have heard of him, either. But in the advertising trade he is a legendary figure, renowned for his ingenious ploys. Above all he is the genius who brooded on the fact that the fashion firm French Connection, which is one of his clients, is based in the United Kingdom, and who came up with the acronym “FCUK.” It’s a brand-name which now stares out at you from billboards and magazines and all kinds of other places as well: you can wear a FCUK tee-shirt, or shave yourself with FCUK shaving-cream. And in its combination of cheap cleverness and crude “transgressiveness” it tells you a good deal about the texture of British life in recent years. The Labour party used to pride itself on having drawn much of its early inspiration from Ruskin, William Morris, and other Victorian prophets. (A common saying was that “we owe more to Morris”—or sometimes it was Methodism—“than to Marx.”) It would make a pretty picture to imagine contemporary Labour leaders introducing Ruskin to Trevor Beattie, or lecturing Morris on the importance of the Fcuk Factor. Still, there Beattie is, dispens-

ing electoral wisdom, and the first fruits of his efforts have now been seen, in a series of campaign posters designed by his firm and placed on the Labour website: party members were invited to vote on those they found most effective.

One of them caused a small furor as soon as the press drew attention to it. Ridiculing Conservative promises to cut taxes and rein in government spending, it carried the caption “The day the Tory sums add up” flanked by pictures of two winged pigs hovering in mid-air, each with a superimposed face—one that of the Conservative leader, Michael Howard, the other that of Howard’s potential finance minister, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer Oliver Letwin. A harmless piece of electioneering rough and tumble? Some commentators didn’t think so. Howard and Letwin are both Jewish, and there were immediate cries of anti-Semitism.

My own reaction was that it was absurd to make a fuss. Friends I spoke to agreed; so did the redoubtable columnist Melanie Phillips of the *Daily Mail*, who would have been the last person in the British press to play down serious possibilities of anti-Semitism. Not that one was entirely happy about the poster. But if protests are to retain their value they ought to be reserved for occasions that matter, not for trivialities. It seemed important, too, not to surrender to a climate which encourages people to complain about racial and social slights on the

flimsiest grounds (or sometimes on no grounds at all). Writing about Britain for an American audience, I hesitate to retail examples of political correctness. Anything we can do you can do better: they are unlikely to have much shock-value. But that doesn't mean that we aren't making steady progress, and we can at least provide some quaint local variants of what Richard Bernstein has called, in his book on the subject, the dictatorship of virtue.

To take just one current instance, the historic Lancashire town of Rochdale is divided into a number of smaller administrative areas. In most towns they would be "wards"; in Rochdale they are known as "townships," a term which goes back hundreds of years. Now the regional police authority has decreed that the word must be replaced (at considerable expense) by "partnership." It is worried that "township" might offend people by reminding them of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Given this kind of background, many of us felt that the flying-pig poster was best ignored, that it was relatively innocuous. But it soon turned out that we were wrong. A day or two later the papers caught up with a second poster designed by Trevor Beattie's firm, and this time it was thoroughly obnoxious. A doctored photograph showed a leering Michael Howard, swinging a watch on a chain, waving the fingers of his other hand, wearing (as far as one could make out from a head-and-shoulders shot) some kind of dark robe. The caption in the background read "I can spend the same money twice."

Several commentators were quick to claim that the picture was based on a photograph of Fagin in the musical *Oliver!*. The exact details of the likeness can be argued over, but not its general spirit. The caricature of Howard, with its suggestion of swindling and sinister hypnotic powers, wouldn't be out of place in a gallery of anti-Semitic stereotypes. And the Fagin parallel also prompted recollections of a speech last year in which no less a person than the

chairman of the Labour party, Ian McCartney, described Oliver Letwin as "a twenty-first-century Fagin"—an indiscretion which up to that point had been forgiven and forgotten.

Some Labour party members and supporters were ashamed of what had been done, and said so. Others, including official spokesmen, denied that there was anything to apologize for. There was a good deal of huffing and puffing (with inevitable Labour accusations of a Tory smear), but the two offending posters were quickly withdrawn. The huffing and puffing continued for a while; a few cynical souls even claimed that Labour had deliberately set out to get some extra publicity, and succeeded. But the Labour leadership was pretty obviously pleased to put the whole business behind it.

What exactly had been going on? No one has ever suggested that Tony Blair is anti-Semitic, and it seems wildly unlikely that Trevor Beattie is. (His closest partner in what might be called aesthetic crime, the boss of French Connection, is Jewish.) But Beattie plays a rough game, and Blair was willing to let him have his head. What followed was the product of coarseness, opportunism, and a determination to show how much a sufficiently ruthless advertiser can get away with—the political equivalent of "FCUK." That it should have been allowed to happen tells one quite a lot about Blair's Labour party. But it was a mistake. It won't happen again. Episode closed.

Unfortunately, it isn't as simple as that. Two or three weeks before the brouhaha over the posters, a less publicized but potentially far more significant incident took place. Mike O'Brien—the British trade minister, and an important member of the Blair team—published an article in *The Muslim Weekly* warning Muslims how ill advised they would be to vote Conservative. Only it wasn't Conservatives in general that O'Brien's fire was directed against, but Michael Howard in particular.

It was emphasized that he wasn't a leader whom Muslims could trust. Naturally no mention was made of the fact that he was

Jewish: the article's implications were "deniable," and any objections that were raised were duly denied. But at times like this I find myself recalling a line from T. S. Eliot's *Preludes*: "Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh." The fact is that there was no need for the article to be so strongly personalized (and good reason, given the audience that was being addressed, for it not to have been). And O'Brien couldn't resist an extra flourish which gave him away. Having polished off the Conservatives, he warned Muslim readers against the Liberal Democrats as well. This time he singled out, not—as you might expect—the party leader, but a comparatively little known figure called Evan Harris. He just happens to be the one senior Liberal Democrat MP who is Jewish.

O'Brien's article suggests how desperate Labour is to hold on to Muslim votes which it is in danger of losing on account of Tony Blair's support for the Iraq war. It is also a reminder that although neither Howard nor Letwin has been closely associated as a politician with Middle East issues, or with support for Israel, their Jewish background is likely to prove a hot topic among Muslims if the Conservatives form a government.

Admittedly that day still seems a long way off. Labour's lead looks unassailable—for the time being, at least. And meanwhile English life continues to change at such a pace that you wonder how much there is going to be left for the Conservatives to conserve when they do eventually get back to power.

Some very odd things are going on. For example, it turns out that registry offices have a list of literary works and pieces of music which they are forbidden to use in civil marriage ceremonies because of their

religious content. The existence of the list came to light when a bride and groom protested after being prevented from reading out their favorite love poem, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "How do I love thee?" According to an official, other proscribed titles include Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet* and—very mysteriously—E. M. Forster's *Howards End*.

Poor Forster. To have fought so hard against censorship, and then to have one of his books banned. To have fought so long for humanism, and to have the book banned on account of its supposed religious content. But then it is hard to believe he would be very happy about lots of things that have happened to England in the thirty-five years since his death.

One thing he would certainly have been dismayed by is the much greater roughness of manners. At its worst, this means positive brutality: there has been a horrendous increase in violent crime; English football hooligans have become a byword throughout Europe. The spread of public drunkenness is another defining feature of Britain in 2005: many city centers are alarming places even in the early hours of evening. Yet the government has suddenly decided—against protests from medical authorities and the police—to relax traditional British licensing laws and allow twenty-four-hour drinking.

Presumably they think there are votes in it. Before the last general election, in fact, the Labour party texted a message to thousands of young voters: "Cdn't give a xxxx 4 1st orders? Vote Labour on thrsdy 4 xtra time." I should explain that xxxx is a four-letter joke used in a beer advertisement. A touch of Trevor Beattie before his time, you might say—and one of the authentic voices of New Labour.

Theater

Shriveled visions

by Mark Steyn

Has there ever been more destructive advice than that doled out by the “creative” writing courses—“write what you know”? You ought to know *something* about your subject, of course: it’s no good writing a novel about a guy who works for the highway department and saying, “He climbed into that big thing that looks like a sort of long tractor . . .” But Shakespeare didn’t know much about court life in Denmark or the problems of minority communities in Venice, and he didn’t do a lot of on-site research, either. And one thing I’ve noticed since 9/11 is that knowing too much about one particular thing gives you a kind of tunnel vision.

The folks who predicted the Yanks would be bogged down in an Afghan quagmire were all the ones who were the biggest experts on the place, had spent years in Kabul and Kandahar and Jalalabad and knew the differences between Pushtuns and Uzbeks and Tajiks and all the rest. Chaps like Jason Burke, who reminisced fondly in *The Observer* about “Mohammed Ghaffar, the white-bearded waiter at Kabul’s battered Intercontinental Hotel who grimly counted off the regimes that have successively run and ruined his country on his fingers.” Burke confidently declared that “the Afghans are now falling in behind the Taliban. The strikes are swiftly radicalizing what was an essentially moderate country. You cannot bomb these men into submission.” Kabul fell two days later—as those of us who’d

skimmed the intro of *The Dummy’s Guide to the Hindu Kush* had predicted a month earlier.

The trouble with “writing what you know” is that you often miss the connection between what you know and what the wider world knows. I always think of Robert Fisk, the veteran Middle East “expert,” in this regard. When the Americans announced they’d taken Baghdad Airport, he scoffed that this wasn’t true and suggested they’d stumbled upon an old RAF airfield abandoned in the Fifties. The problem was that he knew so much about Ba’athist Iraq, he hadn’t had time to keep up to speed with contemporary America, where GPS systems are now standard not just for the U.S. military but for Joe Six-pack’s new Chevy pick-up—in which you press the OnStar button to report your rig won’t start and the gal at the other end says, “Ah, yes, Mr. Steyn, I see you’re at the corner of State and Elm in the parking lot of Madame Fifi’s Bondage Parlor. We’ll have someone with you in ten minutes.” To ascertain the truth of the Baghdad Airport claim, knowledge of Iraq was less important than knowledge of Bud’s Chevy dealership.

And, if you tell a “creative writer” to write what he knows, what he knows is writing—the problems of writing, the pain of writing, his ambivalence about his success at writing. What he doesn’t seem to know is that nobody who isn’t a writer cares about

the problems of being one. Had Shakespeare gone to Stratford-upon-Avon Community College and taken Creative Writing, his first play would have been about the problems of being a writer in an English market town, and his second play would have been about a writer who's having problems writing a play about the problems of being a writer in an English market town, and today we'd never have heard of him. One reason why pharmaceuticals executives and paint salesmen and realtors and helicopter pilots are unmoved by the problems of writers is because, even with no interest in the subject, it's all but impossible to go through life without being exposed to it, in some movie or play or TV show.

Does David Margulies know all that? Ha! If so, he scoffs at it. He knows whereof he writes, and he's going to tell us even if we've heard it all before. The Pulitzer-winning author of *Dinner with Friends*, Margulies has now written (for the Manhattan Theatre Club) *Brooklyn Boy*, a play about an author who writes a bestselling autobiographical novel of his Brooklyn boyhood called *Brooklyn Boy* and then discovers that the grass isn't always greener on the swankier side, all that glitters isn't gold, the tree of fame bears bitter fruit, etc. He's not a bitter fruit, I hasten to add; he's a bitter Jew, which is why the title of his memoir sounds like a lost installment of Neil Simon's voluminous Broadway autobiography.

What he's aiming for is closer to Herb Gardner in *Conversations with My Father*. But it all emerges in standard Broadway Jewish. Not that Margulies isn't a sharp writer. His play opens with the famous novelist Eric Weiss (Adam Arkin) visiting his dad in hospital. As soon as he sees the kid, pop says, "Jesus, I must be sicker than I thought."

It gets a big laugh, and one must respect that. But what's the line saying? It's reassuring the customers that this is one of those traditional urban Jewish relationship comedies: if the one-liner was written to distill instantly the tension and gulf between father and son, it also defines superbly the

limited ambitions of the play's painless gloss on them.

It's not just that Margulies is mining an over-worked seam here. I mean that metaphorically, I hasten to add. A play about a guy mining an over-worked seam would be quite a novelty, but these days on Broadway everything's strictly metaphorical. Anyway, it's not just that he's, er, ploughing a well-tilled field, but that the very familiarity seems to be the point. It's like an anthology of all your favorite agonized-writer clichés in one show.

He's Jewish, right? From New York?

Check.

But the outer boroughs, right? So his dad's some lower-middle-class uncultured type who can't relate to his artsy kid?

Check.

Hey, maybe he's called Manny . . .

Check.

And there's an old high-school pal that the writer can't relate to any more?

Check.

And an ex-wife? And a perky groupie? And a philistine Hollywood producer who options the screen rights, and an airhead star who gets the lead?

Check, check, check, check. Check, please.

Granted all that, within these confines Margulies works adroitly. He tells his tale in six scenes of diminishing effectiveness. The first works because Manny is so vicious. He's unimpressed by the news that his son's book is Number 11 on *The New York Times* bestseller list. "There's an eleven? I thought it only went to ten." He couldn't read the earlier novels, or even remember the titles. Eric helpfully explains that *The Aerie* means the "bird's nest." "Then why couldn't you call it *The Bird's Nest*?" Manny says. "Something people could pronounce. No wonder nobody bought it. They didn't know how to ask for it."

And on and on. The lethal Jewish poppa too stingy to give love is one of the warmest-hearted sentimental stock figures on Broadway, and you wonder if at some

level Margulies isn't parodying the type—if Manny isn't behaving like this because he's seen enough Neil Simon movies, he knows how he's meant to be, in the way cops behave like cop-show cops and waitresses in diners sass you like waitresses in diners from movies they've seen. Or maybe Margulies is making some more oblique postmodern point. As you enter the auditorium, the first thing you see is Ralph Funicello's marvelous set—of an old, dark, weathered Sheepshead Bay apartment block that evokes a faded middle-class solidity. It's wonderfully wistful, and it communicates precisely the ache in Eric Weiss's life—that he has traveled far from his origins and yearns, if not to go back exactly, to capture them at least, to hold them in memory. What follows from that image is such a lot of cookie-cutter relationship pap that you wonder if Margulies isn't suggesting that, no matter how piercing and brilliant your memory of the past, when you try to recreate it just turns into out-takes of *Broadway Bound*, or early Woody Allen.

Once dad's done with him, Eric moves on to the next of his trials, this time in the hospital lounge, where he bumps into an old high-school buddy, Ira Zimmer (Ayre Gross). Ira just knows that he's the model for a character in *Brooklyn Boy*, and he demands Eric own up. "I don't care how rich you get off of me. I just wanna hear you say it: the guy is me!" If Eric is learning that you can't go home again, Ira never left: he still lives in his parents' house and works in the family deli business. Great source of material for a writer. "I've got a story," he tells Eric. "But this time I'm gonna charge you for it."

There's no pleasure in the encounter, no rediscovery, no rekindling. Eric is vaguely irked at the way that as he's become less Jewish, Ira has become more so. Ira resents the way Mister Bigshot Writer Boy has dropped him. "You needed to impress your goyische new Ivy League friends," he sneers. And just how come Eric made it anyway? "What is it? A gene? A chemical?" he

demands to know. "We lived three blocks apart, saw each other every day, practically. Now look where you are and look where I am."

By the end of this encounter, Adam Arkin as Eric has settled on the look: a long-suffering writer with a lot more long-suffering ahead of him, he bulges his eyes out, droops his shoulders, vibrates his head, and endeavors to communicate physical discomfort. This isn't wholly successful: a couple of dabs with a moist towelette and he'd be all set for cocktails with his agent. But Margulies and his director, Daniel Sullivan, are determined to present Eric's pain as more than merely mental. So Arkin does his best to look as if he got mugged in the subway.

Next stop, the missus. They're estranged. But not in the way ordinary couples are. No, they're heading for splitsville because he's a writer with a bestseller and she's a writer who hasn't been able to sell anything for six years. Great Pick-Up Lines You Never Want To Hear No. 27: "Whenever I see you, or smell your scent on an old sweater," she moons, "I'm reminded of all the things I failed at." Nina has had a miscarriage. She is barren, literally and literarily. She is "overwhelmed" by "the contagion of failure," not a concept hit writers want to spend too much time around. Polly Draper is a reliably deft actress and her great gams add a gracefulness to a very sour role. But, if the problem here is that you can't make a happily married couple out of two writers of unequal stature, Nina's hollowness rings hollow: it's hard to see in what circumstances Eric could ever diminish her unhappiness. For tales of mismatched authors, I far prefer the unintentionally hilarious account by cadaverous Seventies pixie Joyce Maynard of her time as shack-up buddy to the celebrated recluse J. D. Salinger. He saw her on the front of *The New York Times Magazine* one Sunday and wrote to her as one New Hampshire writer to another. She moved in with him, but, hungry for insights from the great man, found it a job getting the living legend to quit talking about TV long enough to offer

any advice on the writing life. "Every damned time we sit down to work, it's that same blank page again," he growled. "A person could have a better time at a Doug McLure retrospective." (The brawny Mr. McLure was then starring in "The Virginian.") By comparison, the wretchedness of the Eric-Nina mismatch seems both predictable and fake. But it allows Adam Arkin to fine-tune the two expressions he uses for most of the evening. Settling into the essentially passive reactive nature of his part, he alternates between a great "bewildered" and a more elliptical "generally sad" look.

Thereafter, Eric heads back to the coast, where he's working on the screenplay of *Brooklyn Boy*. He gets picked up by a predatory college cutie, who tells him, "No offence or anything, but fiction is, like, so over." And yet she's read all his books, even the out-of-print ones. His producer Melanie explains to him that the screenplay will need "a few little tweaks" to reduce "the Jewish quotient": "Imagining Jews is much easier than actually seeing them." Besides, they've cast the lead, a handsome blond buff beach bunny with a hit TV show, "Outlaw Billy" ("Billy the Kid but very now"). "I have, like, such awe for writers," he confides to Eric, and he's certainly willing to work at the role: "I always find my characters through my hair. It's like once I get the right hair, I become them."

By this stage, Eric is ready to tear his out and paste it on Surfer Boy's head. But what exactly are the torments he's undergoing? A dad who doesn't read his books, who's more impressed by the limo "The Today Show" sends for the big-time writer than any of the big-time writing. A boyhood pal who's crassly envious. A wife who resents his success. A one-night stand who offers offhand inanities as she's putting out. A demanding producer. A bird-brained star.

We should all have these kinds of problems. Tell it to the election clerks in Ramadi, or the unemployed waitress in Germany who's been informed she'll lose her welfare benefits if she refuses to take a prostitute's

job in the legalized brothel (true). Or—if it has to be a writer—tell it to that female Sikh playwright in Britain forced into hiding after her coreligionists threatened to burn down the theater. So Pa doesn't read your books? How much interest do you take in his business, or the deli guy's? Or the travel agent's, or the hairdresser's, or any of the factory workers' in the industrial park you pass coming off the Interstate? Why is it that the writer's celebrated eye for detail is so obsessed with *his* details? A decade or so back, our local realtor showed me a house in New Hampshire I was interested in. It was a big rambling old place that belonged to a novelist, and in the living room he'd put up an excellent review from *The New York Times*, handsomely framed, considering it had only been published a week earlier. "Wow! That's a great review," I said. Martha snorted. "If he was such a great writer," she said, "he'd have put in an upstairs bathroom."

Well, I demurred. But, on the other hand, I never bought the house. So, when push came to shove, I guess I came closer to her values than to his. What I find perplexing about the Margulies play is that it's supposedly "deeply personal" and yet it's wholly generic. If he has to be a writer, does he have to be a Jewish writer? And, if he has to be a Jewish writer, does he have to be a Brooklyn Jewish writer? Our late pal from these pages, Mordecai Richler, covered much of the same turf as Margulies half a century ago. He wrote a column about selling his first novel:

"I don't get you," my Uncle Jake said. "You put two years into writing a book and now you're happy because some jerk in London has offered you a lousy two-fifty for it. You could have earned more than that cutting my lawn."

Manny to his son, after being handed the new novel: "Whadda you got to say that could take 384 pages?"

Do the relatives of Jewish writers all go to some homogenizing character college in the Catskills? Not quite. As I wrote here on

his death, Richler, a novelist from the Jewish quarter in anglo Montreal in francophone Quebec in the Canadian section of North America, was writing about a ghetto within a ghetto within a ghetto within a ghetto, and somewhere in the messy intersection of those identities something splendid and unmistakeable emerged. When his own coming-of-age story, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, was turned into a movie, the producer told Mordecai, "If this was set in Chicago, we'd make a fortune." Poor old Eric Weiss in *Brooklyn Boy* complains about everything his movie producer's throwing overboard, as well he might: it's already utterly general and familiar. What's to object to? And that's before Margulies has pasted on an unearned mawkish and manipulative ending with the stalest of theatrical devices that nevertheless provides his heroic author with the soothing soft-soapy rubdown he's been pining for all along. Leaving Disney's terrible *Brother Bear*, my little girl said to me, "I think I've seen too many bear movies." After *Brooklyn Boy*, I know I've seen too many Brooklyn boy plays.

Strolling down Broadway afterwards, I mused to my companions about the good old days of assignment writing: you go into the office and the boss says he's optioned this epic poem about a yak herder in Bhutan he wants you to turn into a play. My yearning for this system lasted until the end of the second scene in *Good Vibrations*, the Beach Boys musical. There's an Abba musical, which is a worldwide smash, and a Rod Stewart musical and a Queen musical and a Billy Joel musical, none of which have hit

Abba gold. But still, in such a world, why shouldn't the Beach Boys get a little extra mileage out of the back catalogue? You know the score (in every sense): take every hit the guys ever had, string a plot around them. For the plot, they went to Richard Dresser, whose "plays are widely performed regionally, in New York and in Europe." It's not clear from that whether New York and Europe are the two regions he's performed in, or whether he has other regional strings to his bow. But his short play *What Are You Afraid Of?* "has been running in Germany for several years." It's unlikely he'll be able to say the same about *Good Vibrations*, which gives off a very tired vibe, strung as it is around a perfunctory tale about an uptight high school girl liberated by the fun, fun, fun of the California surf scene.

Mr. Dresser's role is to provide enough dialogue to get from one Beach Boys hit to another, and this he does without notable enthusiasm. If *Brooklyn Boy* at least has the merit of an expert cast, in *Good Vibrations* the players are charmless, the singers aren't up to the harmonies, and the band sounds like open-mike night in a flailing sports bar. If it was hard to see what was so deeply personal about *Brooklyn Boy*, at *Good Vibrations* they're positively declaiming from the footlights that it's a piece of opportunist hackery and they're in it strictly for the money. As they're about to discover, they won't make any. Between them, these two shows testify to the shriveled vision that these days afflicts both artists and impresarios. If all the world's a stage, it would be nice to see some of it on ours.

Art

Avec la main gauche

by James Panero

Cy Twombly has made a lifetime of study out of the incautious line, the art-historical stammer, the naughtiness that comes from the privilege of aesthetic inheritance. He began as an Abstract Expressionist and coasted through conceptualism and serialism and whatever came his way to become a blue-chip artist with a troubling price-to-earnings ratio, all the while producing a product in traditional media with canonical themes. But Cy Twombly, now seventy-six, made a Faustian bargain to become That Painter Who Survived Postmodernism: He had to paint a lifetime of Cy Twomblys.

Now on view at The Whitney Museum is "Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper."¹ Julie Sylvester, the associate curator of contemporary art at The State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, where this show originated, wrote that "Cy Twombly is my hero and has been for a long time." Why would a good person make bad art? Oscar Wilde quipped that "The fact of a man being a poisoner is nothing against his prose. The domestic virtues are not the true basis of art." In the opening essay of the Whitney catalogue, the Columbia historian Simon Schama offered his own answer:

¹ "Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper" opened at the Whitney Museum, New York, on January 27 and remains on view through May 8, 2005. A catalogue of the exhibition has been published by the Whitney Museum of American Art and Schirmer/Mosel (160 pages, \$75).

Insofar as he limns antiquity it is not the hard-edged discipline of celestial geometry; but the deeper, darker, Dionysiac archaisms of an Arcadia where Eros and Thanatos are the closest of chums and where the spilling of blood and semen blossoms into Bacchic horticulture.

Hmm. . . .

Roland Barthes followed on in a reprint of his 1976 essay "Non Multa Sed Multum":

English colleges, Latin verses, desks, notations in finely written pencil. This is what culture is for [Twombly]: an indulgence, a memory, an irony, a posture, the gesture of a dandy. . . . If his graphisms and compositions present themselves as *gauche*, that's tantamount to relegating [Twombly] to the circle of the excluded, the marginated, where, to be sure, he is to find himself in the company of children and invalids.

"Barthes" is a name that can cause grad-student palpitations, but "gauche" it is. Just as parody must be rooted in sincerity while exhibiting an absence of the sincere, so too is Twombly's parodistic line at once a line and a joke made at the line's expense. Barthes continues: "His works don't require that we refute the world of culture (since man's spontaneity is his culture) but they do require that we displace these words, distance ourselves from them, and see them in a different light."

Due to the coincidence of two shows exhibiting at once, Twombly has been compared recently to Rubens, which is something of a joke in itself. The two draftsmen, or in the case of Twombly that would be “draftsman,” could not be more dissimilar, for reasons that go beyond style. In Rubens the line leads to representation internal to the work. The Twombly line directs us to an external idea. What this idea might be requires further investigation, but the answer is something quite apart from the examples set in abstract modernism; though arriving at results resembling Twombly’s, these painters followed a course of aesthetic consideration that shared more in common with Rubens.

Twombly is something else altogether—an attitude and a socioeconomic standard-bearer for the parvenu. Twombly relies on the idioms of youth: manic scribbles (*Untitled* [1954]), boy’s room doodles (*Untitled*, [1961/1963]), notes from math class (*Bolsena* [1969]), fun with the chalkboard (the many examples of white wax crayon on black from the late 1960s and early 1970s). Even graph paper from geometry homework makes an appearance (*Untitled* [1974]). But these jottings, not to mention his use of ball-point pen and crayon and other media from the grammar-school cubbyhole, as well as an interest in bad penmanship, speak less to childhood innocence than the mannered carelessness of an adolescent. Ennui and class consciousness at once mock the hard-working elder while enjoying the fruits of another’s labor. Twombly satarizes the canon while cashing in on the painterly trust fund.

The lofty themes that recur within the Twombly scribble—basic words from Greek and Roman mythology, fragments of poetry, the notes from exotic junkets—locate him in ways that can seem, well, gauche. Upon entering a large room of Twombly’s mythological work from the mid-1970s, with the chicken-scratch words of “Venus” and “Aphrodite,” et cetera, all around, one encounters the visual equivalent of “The Waste Land” as read by An-

thony Blanche: “Enacted on this same d-divan or b-bed./ I who have sat by Thebes below the wall/ And walked among the l-l-lowest of the dead.” The following passage from Waugh might well serve as a description of the Twombly experience:

From the moment he arrived the newcomer took charge, talking in a luxurious, self-taught stammer; teasing; caricaturing the guests at his previous luncheon; telling lubricious anecdotes of Paris and Berlin; and doing more than entertaining—transfiguring the party, shedding a vivid, false light of eccentricity upon everyone so that the three prosaic Etonians seemed suddenly to become creatures of his fantasy.

The end result of *gaucherie* is safety for the gauche—an insulation from criticism. The greatest letdown of Twombly’s drawings is that in fifty years, through all the gestures of risk, this artist dared very little. There are no failures in Twombly’s oeuvre, no worse periods, just as there are no big successes. The most incautious of draftsmen has been the safest of artists. In the bargain of fame, this painter’s fate has been never to paint a great painting.

John Walker is a right-thinking painter in a gauche painter’s world. His abstract collages from the mid-1970s, now on display at Knoedler, contain all the DNA of analytic cubism adapted to new climes.² The facets of Cubist chiaroscuro float to the surface of Walker’s picture planes and settle into a marshland of canvas growth. Walker’s surfaces undulate from scratchy to creamy to sticky, encrusted to smooth—a festering but living membrane. In his *New York Times* review from 1976, John Russell wrote:

Mr. Walker puts on his irregularly shaped pieces of canvas the way a medieval desperado puts on his armor: roughly and ferociously, as

2 “John Walker: Collage” opened at Knoedler & Company, New York, on February 3 and remains on view through March 19, 2005.

if the aim were not so much to create beauty as to fend off an imminent disaster.

Given the history of modern art, such armor might better suit a Quixote than a desperado. Walker's muted palettes of Seventies camouflage—taupe and tan—speak to the defensiveness in the hearts of these ten-foot-by-ten-foot blocks. In the saturated abstractions of two years later, such as *Ostraca I* (1977), battles flare up in the colors of the picture planes with the weight of Titans. These are Walker's most forceful and best works of the period.

Walker's father, a survivor of the Battle of the Somme, has become a recurring motif in his work, which has long grappled with the winners and losers of war. Compared to his landscapes of Maine, for example, here we can view landscapes of contention. Knoedler has paired Walker's large canvases with smaller, recent colleges on paper—washy abstractions in blue, red, and black cut into curved shapes and reassembled. These results range from the exuberant to the menacing. The final, untitled work from 2004 removes bold colors once again and returns to a grid of shuttered gates, white and gray. The English-born painter, who now resides in Boston and Maine, makes another calculated retreat—not a political retreat, but an aesthetic one.

George McNeil (1908–1995) was an abstract painter when he exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair, a figurative artist in the 1960s and 1970s, and in the 1980s and 1990s . . . well, debatable. What is not up for discussion is the aesthetic and popular success McNeil found in the style of his later years. Some likened him to the neo-Expressionists and Jean-Michel Basquiat—that is, if the neo-Expressionists and Jean-Michel Basquiat had studied with Hans Hofmann.

In February, Salander-O'Reilly exhibited "George McNeil: Paintings," a pairing of late work with earlier examples that revealed not a departure from early to late but the steady broadening of modernist practice.³ In *Now Street #1* (1990), the alphabet-block

colors and "push-pull" architecture of the Hofmann School become the burlesque of a reclining woman in fish-net stockings and high-heeled shoes. The poet Richard Howard in his catalogue entry wrote that "In George McNeil's rapturous art, we can look *everywhere*." The ubiquity of inviting widgets and snaking limbs draws our gaze away from McNeil's central figures to all corners of his canvas. Also, these paintings have legs.

Never one to confuse high-modernism with high-seriousness, McNeil exhibited a flair for the bawdy even in his early compositions. In the 1980s and 1990s he really worked out the kinks. Of course McNeil found precedent for sexualized themes in German expressionism. One can just about see McNeil's fish-nets high-kicking it out of an Otto Dix. But McNeil took the idiom of the bawdy and removed from it the grotesque, all while incorporating his themes into a New York School palette. The results are comical and ready for prime-time. Who wouldn't like a painting about a man with a shoe problem (*He Likes Shoes* [1991])? *In the Palm of his Hand* (1991), McNeil's grandest painting and something of the punchline of the show, contained all the wild colors and painterly gifts one might expect from his mature toyshop. And just what was "In the Palm"? You guessed it: a lady's shoe. Rarely do paintings exercise the eyes as can these late compositions. Rarer still does one find humor in the engine under the hood.

Does humor belong in serious painting? George McNeil made a good case for it. He was a serious artist who painted in a humorous way. Cy Twombly operates in the opposite mode: a parodistic artist who would have us take his body of work seriously. *Mann sinistra*, fame may favor the left-handed, but a painter always paints *avec la main droite*.

3 "George McNeil: Paintings" was on view at Salander-O'Reilly Galleries, New York, from February 8 to February 26, 2005.

Exhibition note

"American Modern" at
Hackett Freedman Gallery,
San Francisco.
February 3–April 3, 2005

The surprise of "American Modern" comes in large part from Hackett Freedman's interpretation of its own grand title. All dating from between 1907 and 1942, these paintings, sculptures, and works on paper make the case for a period of advanced American art before Abstract Expressionism claimed the mantle of modernism for its own.

The artists of America's first modern generation worked to assimilate lessons from the School of Paris and blend them with their nativist intuitions. Take the case of John Marin, whose *Landscape* (1914) stands out as one of the stunners of the show. The jazzily askew reds and yellows call to mind the Fauvist palette that enthralled Marin from the day in 1910 when he first visited the Steiglitz Gallery. But they also register his motif: they work to portray the sun refracted through clouds off the Maine coast near Mount Desert Island. In another painter, such a coupling of European Modernism and Emersonian naturalism might not appear so seamless. Certainly, some of Marin's own pictures fail. His signature style substitutes at times for felt texture. But even those weaker pieces reveal a painter who never allowed an aesthetic program to squelch his own emotion. And in his best pictures, such as *Landscape*, Marin's slanted and squiggled brush stroke and his love of the American topos are part and parcel of the same unified urge.

This weave of past and present seems standard fare for all of Michael Hackett's savvy selections, with works by Marsden Hartley, Stuart Davis, John Graham, Elie Nadelman, and Gaston Lachaise. It's impossible merely to wander past their works: they exert a magnetic pull.

But the paintings which form the center of this exhibition are three by Milton Avery. With their simple curvilinear shapes and whimsical distortions, Avery's portraits and landscapes manage to convey a cool depth. Chief among these is *Outdoor Painter* from 1949, the beginning of the artist's late period. The picture has all the lightness of a summer afternoon: a woman reclines on the grass in the center while the painter gazes toward her from beside his easel in the lower right. Stare at the picture for a few minutes, though, and this pleasant scene becomes a fugal play of color. The yellow of the painter's shirt and the woman's straw hat pop out from the green and ochre grass, while the lavender sky pushes down on the muted green trees that loom up from the background. The fields of color have a life all their own. Such moments of singular starkness occur often in Avery. They seem to create a feeling perhaps best described by Wallace Stevens's great phrase: "so far beyond the casual solitudes."

Following last year's exhibition at the Phillips Collection and the recent show of Avery's seascapes at Knoedler, the painter seems to be riding a resurgent wave. The Hackett Freedman exhibition both adds to that excitement and suggests an explanation for its rise: by exhibiting these works on their own, the show suggests that the best work of early American modernism cannot be seen merely as a prelude. This remains a more audacious statement than it may sound. Even sixty-five years after Clement Greenberg's first volleys in *Partisan Review*, it seems hard to shake off the notion that pure abstraction was the teleological project of American Modernism, next to which any modern figural work must appear secondary at best.

Greenberg himself acknowledged Avery's great talents. And with the show at Hackett Freedman, we can now see how well those talents, and those of his best contemporaries, have endured.

—Peter Campion

New York chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

Glenn Dicterow, the concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic, is celebrating his twenty-fifth anniversary: He joined the Philharmonic in 1980. He performs as soloist with his orchestra at least once a season, making him, surely, the most frequent violin soloist with that orchestra. He appears more than Perlman, more than Zukerman, more than Mutter. Whether this is a contractual matter, we are free to speculate.

His anniversary was marked with a subscription concert featuring Aaron Jay Kernis's *Lament and Prayer*. The American composer—now forty-five—wrote this piece in 1995, on a commission for the violinist Pamela Frank by the Minnesota Orchestra. It was an interesting choice for the Dicterow anniversary: not the Beethoven Concerto, or the Brahms, or the Tchaikovsky, but this Kernis work. It was a good choice, too.

First, however, the Philharmonic and its music director, Lorin Maazel, had some other business to take care of: They opened the concert with Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande* Suite, Op. 80. *P&M* was in the New York air, as across Lincoln Center's plaza, the Met was about to do Debussy's opera. I can't say that Schoenberg's symphonic poem was programmed in this period, but we have had that rather a lot lately, in New York. Maeterlinck's play—written in 1892—has legs, whether we see it or not. It lives in music.

Fauré's suite was co-orchestrated by Charles Kocchlin, composer of some lasting

songs (e.g., "Si tu le veux"). It is a lovely and moving work, and Maazel was lovely and moving in it. He is underrated, really, as a French conductor, and some of his best performances in New York have been in that repertory: I think of a *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, for example.

Maazel wasted no time getting into the drama—Maeterlinck's, Fauré's. He immediately placed the listener in another realm. But the playing he drew from the orchestra was not wispy or falsely dreamy. It had a welcome solidity about it. The first movement—the Prelude—built compellingly. The entire orchestra was precise and responsive, and Carter Brey, particularly, contributed a smashing cello solo. In the middle of this movement, a piece of paper—probably a ticket—fluttered down near the stage from a high balcony. That lent a feeling of French ethereality (despite Maazel's solidity).

The second movement—that Spinning Song—was natural, almost nonchalant, and beautifully unmannered. (Remember that Maazel has been knocked—including by me—for being mannered.) In the *Sicilienne*, Maazel reminded us that he is one of the great non-dawdlers of all time, and this little piece benefited greatly from that non-dawdling. (Neither was it hurried.) The final movement—the Death of Melisande—was poignant in its understatement. It could not have been poignant if Maazel had tried, consciously, for poignancy. He led with a very steady pulse, exuding nobility.

At the end of the movement—and the suite—he imparted a sense of continuity, then at once dismounted the podium, to let the audience react. I could not help thinking of Christoph Eschenbach, the music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who had recently been in town (Carnegie Hall). At the end of certain pieces, he holds his hands in the air for a very, very long time, to ward off applause. I have always considered this a cheap stunt: If the audience is so transported as to be unable to applaud, they won't. The conductor should not create an artificial atmosphere, with those ostentatiously suspended hands.

Take another conductor, James Levine: In this same period, he led the Met Orchestra in Mahler's *Lied von der Erde* (also in Carnegie Hall). At its close—when “Der Abschied” was finished—no one could move, no one could clap, people could hardly breathe. Levine didn't have his hands in the air; he just sat there (he does not stand up when he conducts anymore). No trickery for conductors such as Levine, and Maazel (not that the latter, in particular, is averse to a little showmanship—but it is a purer, musical showmanship, if you will).

At any rate, Maazel gave us a wonderful *Pelléas et Mélisande* Suite, and then it was time for Dicterow, and the Kernis. This composer is sometimes called a “neo-Romantic,” and whether the label is just or not, he is not under the spell of the Modernists, nor is he intimidated by them. That alone is remarkable. Kernis has written an explanatory note concerning *Lament and Prayer*. It reads, in part, “*Lament and Prayer* marks the end of a series . . . of works motivated by my reaction to war and suffering, to genocide, especially in terms of the Holocaust . . .” This piece occasionally—just occasionally—succumbs to treacle, but it is a touching, sometimes powerful, piece, and Glenn Dicterow did it full justice.

Like any other Philharmonic-goer, I have heard Dicterow play many, many times, and sometimes he is excellent, sometimes he is just okay. (Of how many of us is this not

true?) I had never heard him play so well as in the Kernis. He was extremely well prepared, and that preparation seemed to include a mental readiness. I have not heard Pamela Frank play this work, but I can't imagine its having a better advocate than Dicterow. His sound was lean and rich at the same time, and he gave the music an insistence, without emoting. He was virtuosic—very accurate—but never showy.

The tone he employed when he got to the Prayer section is hard to describe: pure and sad; tinged with hopefulness—that is the best I can do. In any case, it was the right tone. As he continued this prayer, he was by turns earthy and transcendent, as required. I have said that I can't imagine a more persuasive advocate than Dicterow—but I would still relish the opportunity to hear Itzhak Perlman in *Lament and Prayer*. Lorin Maazel, I should add, made a splendid collaborator.

The second half of the concert was given over to the first symphony of a great symphonist, Jean Sibelius. This is the Symphony in E minor, Op. 39, and it is a challenge to conduct: Many conductors leave it episodic, slightly confusing. Lorin Maazel, however—to borrow language from the 2000 presidential campaign—is a uniter, not a divider. He knows how to unite big, sprawling, unruly works, and he made the Sibelius as cohesive as can be.

In the first movement, he applied a Beethoven-like strength, which this music bore very well. And sonically, I can't remember hearing the Philharmonic more impressive. Sound, as you know, is not a Philharmonic specialty. It might have been on this occasion. Sibelius's second movement was stylish and forward-moving. Fortissimos were tremendous, but never harsh. The third movement—the Scherzo—had clarity, bite, and bounce. At one point, the orchestra scrambled to stay together, and did not quite succeed, but they ended smartly. And in the Finale, Maazel put on a clinic of phrasing—breathing—getting as much life out of the score as possible.

I have sat through many a performance of the Sibelius First—we all have; I have heard many a recording—we all have. I have never heard better.

Which, I see, is a theme of my review here. It was a concert that good.

The chief anniversary boys in 2005 seem to be two—and both are English: Thomas Tallis (born—probably—in 1505) and Sir Michael Tippett (1905–1998). We will be hearing a lot of them before New Year's Day, and have already, really.

Tallis was the first of the great triumvirate of English composers, which also includes his student William Byrd and Henry Purcell (born about 150 years after Tallis). From the death of Purcell, English music was strangely quiet, until about 1900, when Elgar et al. got going. But what a beginning! Tallis is one of the fathers of music: a master of craft, a recipient of much inspiration. Personally and professionally, he was what today we would call a survivor. He worked under Henry VIII, Edward VI, "Bloody Mary," and Elizabeth I, shifting as necessary—and, boy, was it necessary—without losing his essential self.

The composer was celebrated with a concert in the rotunda of Columbia University's Low Library, given by the Vox Vocal Ensemble. This is a group founded by its conductor, George Steel, in 1992, for the purpose of performing sixteenth-century music and twentieth-century music. (The other centuries can fend for themselves.) The group's concert reflected the totality of Tallis's career, gliding between Latin and English, for example.

Vox consists of about twenty members, including women (blessedly). On this evening, they were modest, lovely, balanced, and clean. They were also on pitch, which is gratifying in this exposed music—more than gratifying, necessary. To their credit, they were not too retiring, not too precious. The music had flesh, as well as angel's wings. The singers were not perfect, technically, but their imperfections were slight. In all, they made the most of Tallis's music, which

is achingly beautiful—almost Romantic—in spots, and then stately, or austere, or elegant, or even (glancingly) dissonant. Tallis's writing usually gives you the impression that all is well with heaven and earth.

I will cite one detail, illustrative of the virtue of this group: One Tallis hymn begins, "O nata lux de lumine" ("O light born of light")—and their singing reflected exactly that.

Travel with me, now, from New York to Davos, Switzerland, site of the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum. Every year, this days-long conference culminates in some cultural event—last year, for instance, we had Valery Gergiev and the Kirov Orchestra, doing far, far from their best, to put it mildly. This year, we had some more Russians, these from the Bolshoi Theater: a bit of opera, a bit of ballet. The day before, a major Russian politician—though, alas, not in power—told me that, given the state of affairs back home, all that Russia had to offer Davos was its culture. Other Russians, however, stoutly disagreed.

The program was headlined "The Best of the Bolshoi," and if this was their best—perhaps the Russians should have concentrated on finance. In the operatic portion, we had a pickup orchestra, of about ten, and three singers: Badri Maisuradze, a tenor from Tbilisi; Elena Zelenskaya, a soprano from Baku; and Vladimir Matorin, a bass from Moscow. They sang three arias or songs each, taking turns (tenor-soprano-bass, repeated twice). The "orchestra" had a miserable time: These players seemed not to have rehearsed, and they usually sounded sickly, but they persevered.

And for ambassadors of Russian culture, our singers certainly sang a lot of Italian opera. The tenor did Canio's aria from *Pagliacci* (he was dressed that way, sort of, with a suggestive scarf down his middle), "E lucevan le stelle" from *Tosca*, and "Nes-sun dorma" from *Turandot*. He has a lovely natural instrument, but little technique—at least little that one could detect on this night. Worse, he is full of exaggerations,

muggings, and interpolations, singing like a parody of Caruso—or like a Warner Brothers cartoon. And the man's Italian . . . is not Italian.

La Zelenskaya is a real diva, with diva airs, and a diva walk. Her singing did not entitle her to it, though. Hers is a heavily draped voice, which would benefit greatly from a little lightening. In "Vissi d'arte" (*Tosca*), she was repeatedly and woefully flat, and her Italian was about on par with the tenor's. Her "Pace, pace" (*La Forza del Destino*) was slow and mannered, and—I must say again—like a parody. She was far more at home in Lisa's aria from Tchaikovsky's *Pique Dame*, which bordered on moving.

The show was stolen by the bass, Mr. Matorin, who looked like—sorry—a parody of a Russian bass: beard and all. He did sing (nothing but) Russian music, including items closely associated with his great predecessor, Chaliapin. One of these was Mussorgsky's *Song of the Flea*, in which Matorin laughed along devilishly. (This is supposed to be Mephistopheles singing; if a bass has his mouth open, chances are he's the devil.) Matorin could have been more subtle, but he was determined to hold nothing back. At the conclusion of his last number, he milked the applause for a very, very long time—so long that, by the time he exited the stage, the applause had petered out.

The Bolshoi Theater put its better foot forward in the ballet portion of the evening, which availed itself of recorded music. A wild card in this presentation was the *Tarantella* (or *Grande Tarantelle*) by Louis Moreau Gottschalk (choreographed by Balanchine). Yes, a good ol' Louisiana composer, danced to by the Bolshoi, at a tony international gathering in the Swiss Alps—that's globalism, bucko.

The Cleveland Orchestra traveled to Carnegie Hall for no fewer than four concerts. Their conductor was their music director, Franz Welser-Möst, and their soloist was Radu Lupu. He played all five Beethoven piano concertos (two on one night). The Cleveland played an assortment of or-

chestral music, including symphonies by Schubert, Shostakovich, and Dutilleux, and a new piece by Harrison Birtwistle. I wish to focus on a concert that featured Roy Harris's Symphony No. 3 (his big hit).

First, however, a word about Lupu, who opened this evening with Beethoven's Concerto in B flat. Lupu is about to be sixty, and he has long had the reputation of being a cerebral, probing pianist, specially connected to the central literature. Alfred Brendel enjoys much the same reputation. Whether it is earned, in either case, we might argue about. In any event, Lupu was far better in the B-flat concerto than he had been in the C-major, the night before. Then, he was a curious mixture of care and indifference, often failing to lay a glove on Beethoven's score. He was like that in the first movement of the B-flat: listless, mousy, blasé. This glorious movement—*Allegro con brio*—lacked a sparkle. He played beautifully in the Largo, however, and the Rondo acquired some of the sparkle missing before.

As for the Harris, it was good to have it and Aaron Jay Kernis's piece so close together. When it comes to modern music—recent music, let's say (although, shudder to think, the Harris Third is almost seventy years old now)—we have had a surfeit of the accepted types: serialist, minimalist, arrogantly experimental. What the establishment wants is music it calls "challenging," which can be a euphemism for "impossible to enjoy, appreciate, or admire." Anything that Elliott Carter writes will receive a hearing. (And much of his oeuvre deserves it.) But it occurred to me, not long ago, that I had never heard a Piston symphony in concert. At first, I thought this could not be so: In a lifetime of concertgoing, never a Piston symphony? But I could not remember an instance. And at least two of those symphonies are dear to me.

I could rant on, but my main point is: It was a treat to have the Harris, amidst the Carter, Berio, and Boulez. I know a distinguished music critic for whom the Third Symphony is the antidote for heartache; I have another friend who swears by Tchai-

kovsky's *Pathétique*. Psychology aside, the Harris is an open, confident, soaring, ultra-American symphony, and it was given a decent reading by Welser-Möst and the Cleveland, though much more could have been done with it. Two seasons ago, we had a performance by Maazel and the New York Philharmonic, and that was a showstopper: engaged, involving, uplifting. Maazel seemed lit by the music. Welser-Möst, on the other hand, was rather decorous—as he had been, believe it or not, in Shostakovich's Symphony No. 11, "The Year 1905."

Forget the performance criticism, however: Thanks for the Harris. And please, Herr Welser-Möst: A little Piston?

We began with Fauré's suite from his incidental music to *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and we will conclude with Debussy's opera, finished four years after the Fauré. This is sometimes called the French *Parsifal*, and James Levine is a master of it. He is a master of the German *Parsifal* too (needless to say). He has been criticized for slow tempos in both operas—but on the afternoon I heard *Pelléas*, his tempos were not sluggish, or even especially slow. They were true and right. This conductor was guided by some internal compass, which may be the logic of the score. In this opera, you enter a dream world, or ideally you do. As in *Parsifal*, time is suspended, and you are simply in the thrall of the piece. Levine made this happen, and from the beginning, too—you took no time surrendering yourself.

In the part of Golaud was the veteran Belgian bass José van Dam, who brought all his authority. We heard the rough beauty of his voice, we saw the dignity of his bearing (though Golaud loses it, of course, badly).

His sung French is exemplary, and he is dependable in all other ways as well. Mélisande was the Swedish mezzo Anne Sofie von Otter, who was as we have come to expect: radiant, accurate, convincing. Her voice blended nicely with the orchestra, in fact becoming one of its instruments (one of its solo instruments, to be sure). And it's astonishing how easily her soft, almost whispered singing carries. She might as well be in your living room with a spinet, as in the Metropolitan Opera House with Levine's orchestra.

An Italian bass, Roberto Scandiuzzi, had the part of Arkel, and he produced a simply gorgeous sound. The British mezzo Felicity Palmer was a commanding Geneviève, as she is a commanding First Prioress (in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*), and as she is a commanding everything else she essays. The tenor—Pelléas—was an American, William Burden, who is fresh, relaxed: not dissimilar to Matthew Polenzani, a favorite at the Met. Burden had trouble being heard in the lower register, but this was a minor problem.

The production was Jonathan Miller's from 1995, swirling, dark (literally), and serviceable. The performance on this afternoon was "dedicated to the memory of Victoria de los Angeles," who died in January. She was a splendid Mélisande—but if we start eulogizing Victoria, we'll be here till next Tuesday.

One final thought: *P&M* is a lulling, entrancing opera, that may just close your eyes. I remarked to a friend at an intermission that the performance was being broadcast, over the radio. She said, "That sounds dangerous—people may drive off the road." A consideration.

The media

Style-section politics

by James Bowman

Michael Jackson, says Robin Givhan, the fashion correspondent of the *Washington Post*, “appears incapable of wearing anything that does not resemble a costume, no matter how serious the circumstances.” It seems that the King of Pop showed up for his trial on the charges of child molestation dressed like, well, the King of Pop. On the trial’s second day, for instance, he wore

a dove gray brocade vest over a red shirt. Instead of a necktie—which he had skipped the day before as well—he wore a medallion at his neck. It wasn’t a bolo, which is typically a thin cord held in place by a sliding metal loop. Jackson’s neckwear was vaguely militaristic and subtly aristocratic. His blazer had an elaborate crest off to one side. Trying to parse all the references and symbols in this ensemble—prep schooler, deposed royalty, honored citizen, embattled soldier—would keep a doctoral candidate in semiotics occupied for months.

Ah, yes, semiotics: the branch of philosophical linguistics that first made noticing such things as the get-up of Michael Jackson into a subject of serious intellectual study. But Miss Givhan, as befits a fashion correspondent, is not really a semiotician, except in the sense that we are all semioticians nowadays. She is just keen that people should dress for the occasion, as she had shown the week before when she wrote a column sharply critical of Vice President

Cheney for attending the commemoration service for the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in “the kind of attire one typically wears to operate a snow blower.” Instead of dark overcoat, fedora and dress shoes, the Vice President had worn an anorak with his name on it, a ski cap labeled “Staff 2001,” and hiking boots.

Yet Miss Givhan was also enough of a semiotician to recognize that, where Vice President Cheney had simply made a fashion *faux pas*, Michael Jackson might well have had a subtle end in view in adopting his foppish attire:

For Jackson, wearing gold armbands and bejeweled vests might be a savvy decision. They underscore the widely held belief that Jackson exists in his own world. That he doesn’t quite grasp the rules of adulthood because he never made the transition from childhood. Each ostentatious flourish sets Jackson apart. His attire emphasizes that he is nothing like his so-called peers. And if he is so unlike them, the logic might go, do the same standards apply? . . . It’s a unique courtroom style for a one-of-a-kind defendant. And it may prove to be more beneficial to Jackson’s case than a simple navy suit and tie ever could be.

In other words, it was not really a question of costume *versus* no-costume as she had suggested in her leading paragraph. It was a question of which costume would best suit his forensic purposes. Most people think it

to their advantage to go to a trial in which they are the defendant costumed as ordinary guys and gals in order to induce the ordinary guys and gals of the jury to identify themselves with them. But if you are not only *a* celebrity but, in a way, *the* celebrity, the very embodiment of what it means to be a celebrity in the twenty-first century, as Michael Jackson is, it may well be more to your advantage to go costumed as a show-biz freak. The jury must instinctively understand that, by doing so, you will have performed essentially the same kowtow to its opinion as the neighborhood thug or burglar in his navy suit and tie—that is, by condescending to live up to its expectations of you.

It's a reminder, if any reminder were needed, of how much of public life is performance. In fact, the reminder we're more likely to need these days is that, sometimes at least, it is something more than performance. Sometimes there are realities involved. Such a reminder might have been useful for the new associate editor of the *Post* and op-ed columnist Eugene Robinson, who wrote in the paper on the same day as Miss Givhan's semiotic essay to criticize President Bush for playing the villain rather than the hero in the disaster movie called *Global Warming*. Mr. Robinson himself only recently migrated to the op-ed page from the "Style" section of *The Post*, where he had been assistant managing editor, when someone with less seniority was appointed to the paper's managing editorship in succession to Steve Coll. As the other person, Philip Bennett, the former foreign editor, is white and Robinson is black, there were strong feelings felt and strong words expressed by some in the *Post*'s racially divided newsroom who thought, or professed to think, that the appointment had been racially motivated. The associate editorship and the op-ed column were Robinson's consolation prizes and a sop to the restive troops inclined to suspicion of the management's motives.

Yet for the reader, the consequence seems

to have been the further importation of Style-section politics to the editorial pages. Few "issues" before the public today elicit more in the way of public performance—some would say posturing—than that of *Global Warming*, and Mr. Robinson's point was that, by failing to mention the subject in his State of the Union address, the President had, in effect, missed one of the steps in the elaborate dance that public occasions like the State of the Union address have become—except that his analogy was drawn from the cinema rather than the ballet. Referring to the formulaic quality of the typical disaster film, Robinson wrote that the President was playing the role of the "Benighted Authority Figure" who refuses to see the volcano outside his window when the handsome young scientist who is the male lead—E. Robinson, as it might be—comes to him with anguished face and says something like: "That baby's going to blow."

Mr. Robinson has his B.A.F. replying in insouciant tones: "Problem? I don't see any problem, and I'll tell you one thing: There's not gonna be any evacuation, not on my watch. Now everybody back to work."

Yet there is a reason why disaster movies are formulaic, and it is that real life is so seldom like them. Just as the delusions of movie paranoiacs are as monotonously right as those of their real-life counterparts are monotonously wrong, so in the same way the guy who says "there's nothing to worry about, go back to work" is in real life almost as sure to be right as his movie counterpart is to be wrong. There's no mystery about it. Drama is made out of life's exceptional events rather than its most ordinary ones, and an obvious corollary of this obvious principle is that life as represented in the movies is back-to-front, the extraordinary made ordinary and the ordinary made extraordinary. Substantively, there was not only nothing that the President could do about *Global Warming*, there was nothing he could do even to contribute to the virtually insignificant palliative measures of the Kyoto Treaty which, when it came up for a

vote under the auspices of the Clinton administration, was voted down in the Senate 98–0. In the absence of any better definition of “politically impossible,” those kinds of numbers will do very nicely. Nor were they in the least surprising, since living up to the Kyoto Treaty’s provisions would have involved a massive curtailment of economic activity on these shores and have devastated the American economy far more than that of any of the countries who adopted it, most of whom would have been among the gainers from America’s loss.

That’s the worst part of the Style section’s expectation of drama in politics: it’s so often bad drama. Mr. Robinson’s Benighted Authority Figure, for example, is, as the name suggests, a stock figure. The script demands of him only that he be stupid and, probably, corrupt, and beyond that it has no interest in him or in why he thinks as he does. Evil tends to be its own explanation in the movies, since if the B.A.F. didn’t exist we’d have to invent him. Oh, right. We did invent him. But in real life it’s not enough to call him a B.A.F. We have to justify the “benighted” part, and that Robinson, like so many other journalists in a similar position, fails to do because he thinks it unnecessary to do. The script has already been written, after all; it’s the politician’s job simply to read the lines. It’s fair enough for Robinson to criticize Bush about Global Warming, but to do so responsibly he should have made some reference to the political impossibility of his doing what he, Robinson, recommends.

Not likely, I agree. But while we’re wishing we might as well wish for an acknowledgment that there is more than one opinion about the desirability of making the kind of immense commitment of resources it would take to make even a little difference in what is sure to happen anyway. The Danish scientist Bjorn Lomborg points out that “implementing Kyoto will cost \$150–350 billion globally every year, merely to postpone the temperature rise by six years from 2100 to 2106. It is a very expen-

sive way to achieve very little.” And he adds that, “for the cost of Kyoto in just the year 2010, we could solve the biggest problem facing mankind: we could permanently provide clean drinking water and sanitation for every person in the world.” Maybe in real life, in other words, there is some method to the madness of the poor old B.A.F. But like many of us, Robinson has simply grown used to thinking of politics and public life in general as if there were nothing more to it than performance, nothing more than the tawdry disaster movie of the Style section.

It’s true that, in the blurring of the distinction between political reality and the movies, presidents themselves have long been complicit. Only instead of disaster movies, they want us to see uplifting made-for-TV Hallmark specials. That’s why President Reagan, when he first arrived in Washington from Hollywood and environs, first put Lenny Skutnik, the hero of the Air Florida crash into the Potomac, into the audience for his State of the Union address in 1982, and why, twenty-three years later, President Bush was engaging in similar gestures with Safia Taleb al-Souhail, the daughter of an Iraqi dissident murdered by Saddam Hussein, and Janet and Bill Norwood, the parents of a Marine who had been killed in Iraq. But when Miss Souhail and Mrs. Norwood embraced as both were standing to receive the tribute of the audience, it was a drama too far for some. Back in the Style section so recently vacated by Mr. Robinson, for example, Tom Shales was still harping on the show-biz aspect of the speech as if it were a scandal nobody had ever noticed before. “If George W. Bush could sing and dance to ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy,’” he had led off his review of the speech in the *Post*, “he probably would have last night, as part of a sentimental patriotic spectacle technically known as the State of the Union address.”

You might suppose that it would have occurred to Mr. Shales to think that if the thing were *not* a bit of show-biz it would hardly have made sense for the paper to ask

him, its television critic, to have written a review of it in the first place. But then he is one of the Style section politicoes who have given up the task of pronouncing on the aesthetic artifacts thrown up by our politics in favor of what they take to be more substantive critiques, including inquiries into the genuineness of the emotions our political showmen put on display. Thus Shales naturally had to say something about the fact that the President appeared for a moment to feel emotion at what quickly became known as “the hug,” writing that, “The president, strikingly, stared up at the balcony with little visible emotion on his face but eyes that appeared to be growing misty. Was this a genuine expression of America appreciating its men and women in uniform, or a shameless political stunt using grief-stricken parents as pawns?” he asks rhetorically. “As we all know in the age of media moments, it matters less what it was than what it was perceived to be, and to a greater degree than perhaps any other time since he’s been in office, Bush appeared to have the perception presidency well in hand.”

Ouch! And yet, once again I ask, if “the perception presidency” is such a bad thing, why does the *Post* employ a TV critic to judge it? Perhaps it is because Mr. Shales so resents the task he has been assigned that he is so savage about the presidential extravaganza, but his underlying assumption that something other than the perception presidency is not only desirable but possible seems questionable at best. In fact, it strikes me as being just like Eugene Robinson’s assumption that Global Warming and no Global Warming are valid political alternatives. That’s not serious criticism. In fact, it is as gestural as anything the President gets up to. Neither Mr. Shales nor Mr. Robinson may have anything realistic to suggest, but both have learned to employ their critical talents in the higher cause of making their own insight or concern, and above all their own infinite superiority to those they criticize, the subject of every column. It’s a critic’s disease, and as a critic myself I know

how easy it is to contract it. But the cure is to be subjected to criticism oneself, and that is what Style-section politics so rarely allows to happen.

The nearest thing you can find to self-criticism is the sort of oblique apology for Mr. Shales’s sourness and cynicism that was run by Style the following day in a conciliatory piece by Neely Tucker called “The Moment that America Embraced.” Without ever explicitly mentioning either the Shales insinuations or the outright skepticism among some others of the President’s habitual detractors, notably Chris Matthews and Ron Reagan during MSNBC’s coverage of the speech, Mr. Tucker confidently informed his readers that The Hug was both genuine and spontaneous. “The women’s embrace was so unplanned that when Norwood started to pull back, the chain from her son’s dog tags, which she had been holding, became entangled in al-Souhail’s accoutrements,” he wrote breathlessly. “The women had to disentangle themselves on live television, the awkwardness lending the moment an unrehearsed charm. It was, by any measure, magic.” Well, maybe not by any measure, but certainly by the measure of Style-section politics, which is increasingly the only measure that matters at the *Post*, as at other papers.

And for every pro-administration moment of magic such as this, there are dozens devoted to ostentatiously sober analysis casting the President as the B.A.F.—or worse—in the lurid blockbuster called *All the World’s Problems and How Much I Care About Them*, written and directed by some snippy columnist. The top exponents of Style-section politics, Maureen Dowd and Frank Rich, work for *The New York Times* rather than the *Washington Post*, but in the Style section itself the most prominent practitioner is Tina Brown, whose regular Thursday column has become a highlight of the paper for many Washingtonians who read it each week to see if its previous heights of narcissism will be topped, as they often are. That’s why it

was so remarkable that, on the very day when Tom Shales was submitting the President to his customary flaying, Stylish readers were introduced to a new and seemingly chastened Tina. As usual she projected her own feelings onto the People Like Us for whom she always speaks so confidently, but now the feelings were different—changed, changed utterly (at least for this week) by the Iraqi elections:

Democrats have spent the past four years sneering at George Bush's lack of nuance, but now they're sick of nuance themselves. Nuanced positions on Iraq just make them feel small. Liberals don't want to be left spreading the grumpy notion that liberty can't travel, even if it turns out to be true. . . . Even reporters on the ground in Iraq could hardly believe what they were living through as they watched the power of an idea transmute into the living, breathing form of black-clad women, Marsh Arabs and throngs of Kurdish mountaineers festively making their way to the polls. The father of a young reporter who has spent most of the last two years in Iraq shared with me his son's e-mail from Baghdad. "We journalists are all sitting round and asking each other how we missed what's clearly a far deeper drive for political and

societal change than we realized. It is a measure of our isolation here—and also, I think, a measure of how the violence and humiliation of the occupation has masked people's very genuine feelings."

Only a fortnight before, she had been banging on in her usual fashion about President Bush's various world-endangering neuroses, with the nature and etiology of which she was on familiar terms since reading the latest book club favorite on the Upper West Side, Justin Frank's "insight-crammed" *Bush on the Couch*. Now she was writing that "Every Bush hater you meet in New York is engaged with an inner struggle of how much to let go of the past." True, she went on to compare their situation to that of "wives midway through marriage therapy designed to reconcile and foster a new beginning with a feckless husband who has perpetually let them down. Hillary Clinton knows what that feels like better than anyone else"—which may be why New York's junior senator seems to be trimming her sails, lately, to the prevailing starboard winds. But even so much of self-criticism as this represents could mark an epoch in the evolution of Style-section politics. So, at any rate, I would like to believe.

André Malraux: Politicizing literature, fictionalizing politics

by David Pryce-Jones

Intellectuals by and large disgraced the twentieth century. With rare exceptions, they whored after strange gods, of which the most odious and overwhelming was power. Writers, artists, philosophers, historians, even musicians and architects, enthusiastically committed their talents to the service of one cause or another. This treason of the clerks spread like an epidemic, diminishing the world's hard-won stock of wisdom and morality, and civilization is still reeling from it.

Why did so many intelligent men and women choose to serve power rather than speak truth to it as conscience and an honorable tradition of principled opposition dictated? What explains the adoration for Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky, for Hitler and Mao and Ho Chi Minh, Mussolini and Pol Pot, Castro, and the rest of this deranged and inhuman crew of cause-mongers? In play was personal insecurity—and its converse, a self-promoting vanity—a romancing of violence, false messianism, collective instinct, the lust to destroy, and not least the claim of special privilege.

These motives amalgamated in the person and career of André Malraux, probably the most celebrated novelist to emerge between the wars. Malraux is, Olivier Todd's new biography¹ reminds us, a most illustrative case study in the period's intellectual

dereliction. Every novelist quarries material from his experience, and then uses imagination to shape or enlarge whatever he needs for his purposes of rendering reality as he sees it. Truth in fiction, after all, is only a variety of lying, and the more successful the lie, the greater the truth may be. Malraux turned conventional literary strategy inside out, exploiting fiction to cast the aura of heroism over himself.

Malraux's ambition was never in doubt, nor was his energy. He was determined to leave his mark on the world. Coming from a modest background in the north of France, he quickly found a place in the Paris of Max Jacob and the Surrealists, from whom he derived the notion that his actions were always their own justification. An autodidact, he attended a few lectures at the *Ecole des langues orientales* but followed no systematic study for a degree, though afterwards he made wild claims that he had learned Sanskrit and Persian, and could converse in Russian—he who spoke only French and was unable to understand even basic English. A nervous tic, constantly breaking across his face, seemed to emphasize the urgency of whatever he was proposing. With an eye for a first edition or an under-priced work of art, he was a dealer by nature, and remained one all his life.

His first adventure was in the French colonies of Southeast Asia. He travelled there with his wife Clara and a friend in

¹ *Malraux: A Life*, by Olivier Todd, translated by Joseph West; Alfred A. Knopf, 360 pages, \$35.

order to cut Buddhist statues off a temple, with a view to selling them—in New York, he hoped. To protect the cultural heritage, the colonial authorities naturally tried to send Malraux to prison for theft and vandalism. Literary Paris, led by André Gide and François Mauriac, petitioned for clemency on the simple grounds that Malraux was a young man with a promising future. This worked so well that the colonial authorities came to be represented as bumbling philistines, and Malraux as the savior of the temple and its statues. Special privilege, Malraux had discovered early, was able to invert common sense and natural justice enough to distort reality altogether.

Where Surrealism had been private and precious, communism was public and vociferous. “Communism is not hope, but the form of hope,” Malraux said, in one of the oracular aphorisms characteristic of so much of his writing. Never actually joining the Communist Party, he proved a master of its agitprop lingo and imagery. The novels—*Les Conquérants*, *La Condition humaine*, *L'Espoir*—were written in jerky prose, lyrically obscure, and doom-laden. Caught up in glamorized conspiracy, clenching fists and obeying the slogans they shout, Malraux's characters are cardboard cut-outs, speaking and acting in ways that have little or nothing to do with real life and real feelings, but that altogether amount to an incitement to Communist revolution.

What is all too real in the novels is the love of violence and the belief in power. In a scene that sealed his international reputation, he described how Chiang Kai-shek and his men had suppressed revolution in Canton by stuffing Communists into the boilers of railway engines. No such atrocity in fact occurred. Nor had Malraux then visited China, but typically the invention of the novel transmuted into widespread assumption that Malraux was reporting his experience—an assumption he encouraged with some of his habitual dark mutterings. Years later, on the eve of his own visit to China, President Nixon had it in his head

that Malraux had actually helped bring Chinese Communists to power, and in the course of their conversation Malraux did not disabuse him. Insecurity and vanity alike were evident in Malraux's compulsion to pretend that his fictions, his lies and his boasting, were the living vibrant truth.

Here was a writer proclaiming that intellectuals could exchange the ivory tower for a revolver and the comradeship of an armed column on its way to the front, and that a death for the cause was as necessary as it was glorious. Here was a writer mythologizing History with a capital “H.” Arthur Koestler, himself a Communist activist at the time, sought Malraux out to ask for contributions to the cause, and recorded how he “listened in silence, occasionally uttering one of his characteristic, awe-inspiring sniffs which sound like the cry of a wounded jungle beast.” Playing his part perfectly, Malraux finally said, “Yes, yes, my dear friend, but what do you think of the apocalypse?”

Politicizing literature and fictionalizing politics, Malraux became a most complete and public representative of the treasonable clerks of the Thirties. In a period photograph still often reproduced, he looks lean and handsome, with black hair flopping youthfully and a cigarette in his persuasive hand, that tic and those sniffs for once still, a cross between Baron Munchausen and Che Guevara.

The Soviets gladly enrolled this willing acolyte in their cause. In 1934 he went to Berlin on a mission to plead for Dimitrov of the Comintern, accused of burning down the Reichstag. Hitler refused to meet him, but Malraux later claimed (as usual, falsely) to have met Goebbels. That same year, at a Moscow Writers' Congress, he was able to declare, “I believe in the Soviet humanism to come, a humanism that is analogous to but not the same as that of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance period.” The Soviet artist, he thought, was free to do what he wanted. He knew Ehrenburg, Babel, Eisenstein, Gorky, Pasternak, even Trotsky, who in turn wrote about him—but ap-

parently he learnt nothing from them. There was virtually no limit to his drivel: "The enormous strength of the Soviet force from the outset is that it is the type of civilization from which Shakespeares emerge."

By means that are still rather obscure, he raised money to acquire aircraft for the Republicans in the Spanish civil war, and appointed himself colonel of the squadron. Unable to pilot a plane, he nonetheless pretended to have been shot down in combat in the air. Asked by a journalist at the time which country was closest to the true ideals of democracy, he answered "Russia." When the Communists were about to massacre the Anarchists in Spain in the atrocity which opened George Orwell's eyes, he told Victor Serge, one of Stalin's luckier victims, "I would do nothing against Stalin at the moment, I accepted the Moscow trials and I am prepared to accept those in Barcelona." In fact he had never met Stalin, but that did not prevent him saying later in life, "Stalin said to me . . ."

The fall of France in 1940 was surely an opportunity for someone who claimed that writing and action involved the same commitment. Instead of joining either the Free French in London or enrolling in the local resistance, Malraux retired to a country house at Collemiers in the Vichy zone with Josette Clotis, his lady friend of the moment, and wrote in tranquility. At the last possible date, in the spring of 1944 with D-Day in the offing, he contacted a maquis and its English officer, Major George Hiller. Once again he adopted the brazen expedient of appointing himself a colonel, as in Spain. That July, he and Hiller ran into German soldiers at a roadblock. The Germans opened fire, and when Hiller and Malraux ran for it, a bullet grazed Malraux's leg. Taken prisoner, Hiller escaped and Malraux was released after forty-eight hours. In Paris a few days later, in the Ritz Bar with Hemingway, Malraux was claiming to be in command of two thousand men. One of Hemingway's armed companions asked, "Papa, shall we shoot this asshole?" Malraux's war lost nothing in

subsequent telling. Shrapnel had sliced his belt; he had faced a German firing-squad; he had held up the Das Reich division, and liberated Alsace-Lorraine.

The urge to power and the claim of special privilege took an unexpected turn when Malraux latched on to General de Gaulle in the aftermath of the war. As de Gaulle's in-house intellectual and unconditional champion, he was a minister immediately after the war and then for ten years after de Gaulle's return in 1958 in the cabinet with the rank of *ministre d'état*. He liked to declare himself the second most important person in the country, and de Gaulle's eventual successor.

Those people who go in for mythologizing mostly end up in asylums. France, it seems, needs all the heroes it can gather, with the result that Malraux has been buried in the Pantheon, the stately national mausoleum where France honors its great dead. Among biographers and critics who have contributed to the Malraux myth are Jean Lacouture, Walter Langlois, Curtis Cate, and Axel Madsen, all of whom have been prepared to take him largely at face value, finding excuses for his self-promoting deals and euphemisms for his bragging. Silence envelops the several specialist studies that have revealed the lies about his activities in Indo-China, China, and Spain, his frivolity about the Soviet Union, the preposterous magnification of his trivial role at the end of the war, and his servility towards de Gaulle.

For a number of years Olivier Todd has been at the center of French literary life as a journalist, a novelist, and the author of a biography of Albert Camus. He has worked assiduously to dig out unusual sources and to interview those who crossed Malraux's path. He has done himself no favor, however, by writing in the historic present. The tense allows him to mingle fact with value judgment and commentary of his own in a style that is a disconcertingly abased pastiche—sometimes a parody—of generic Malraux.

To choose a random example: "Malraux doesn't think the winners are always right. Neither does he think that Stalin is blameless. But he behaves as if some losers are wrong. Trotsky is a startling journey, a destiny at a standstill facing death. Justice is desirable, certainly, but efficiency perhaps more so." The core meaning of this passage presumably is that Malraux recognized that whatever Stalin's faults were, he had defeated Trotsky and was in power willy-nilly. But what sort of conceit is it to place "a startling journey" in direct apposition to Trotsky, or to describe his imminent assassination as "a destiny at a standstill facing death?" In this context, "destiny" itself begs several questions. As for the dubious aphorism about justice and efficiency, is this reflecting Todd or Malraux?

Or again, from a description of Malraux in his country house during the war:

In the evening, they talk. That is, they listen to Malraux practising his favorite sport, monologue. He comes out with subjects like a professor opening a seminar, which turns into a small-scale lecture. Let's talk about sunsets. Who believes in eternal life? Actually, what does Grosjean think about that? When I was shot down in Spain . . . The days go by, the months go by. Malraux writes. He is a man of cycles: in Indochina and in Spain, he acted first, then wrote. He tries out fragments of the novel he is working on on Grosjean. Malraux is digesting two defeats, that of Spain and that of France. The time for arms in Madrid is in the past, the time for writing in Collemiers is in the present. Malraux believes in words when he has no weapons.

The core meaning here presumably is that Malraux spent those days writing, and that his evenings were rather a bore to others present.

But do the topics of sunset, eternal life and being shot down in Spain come from some source which Todd does not attribute, either Malraux himself or his friend Grosjean, or possibly Todd's own inventiveness? Why should anyone believe Todd's say-so

that Malraux is digesting two defeats? Might he not have chosen to be safe and comfortable in the country? Anyhow what sort of a judgment is it to accept the defeat of France? If past cycles in his career involved acting first and writing later, why now is he writing first and proposing to act later? What's the point of this interjection? "Malraux believes in words when he has no weapons" is poetical assertion on Todd's part, just meaningless rodomontade. Malraux had only to leave the house and contact the resistance to acquire a weapon. If he had had a weapon, would he then have disbelieved in words?

The intention may have been to pay some sort of compliment to Malraux, but over five hundred pages of such pastiche blur the narrative, exhaust, and finally annoy. It is a pity. When discernible, Todd's Malraux is more realistic than the Malraux of other biographers, a selfish and calculating careerist, indifferent to the women in his life to the point of cruelty, no sort of husband, lover, or parent, no sort of friend or colleague either, a bully and poseur, showing a contempt for truth that was actually contempt for people obliged to listen to him, careful to ensure that he was always the unscrupulous beneficiary of special privilege, pushing into the public arena the bogus persona he had created for himself. Todd also throws light on his depressive bouts, his drinking, his addiction to uppers and downers. The nervous tics were the result of Tourette's syndrome, an affliction which Malraux was born with, and Todd offers the interesting theory that this syndrome may be linked to the boasting and lying.

About the boasting and lying, Todd is equivocal. He realizes that Malraux was a fellow-travelling stooge, that he did not do the deeds he wished people to think he had done, that in Malraux's mind, "what should have been, was," but he mostly prefers to deal with this aspect of the man outside the text, discreetly, in the small print of the footnotes. All too often, he lapses into the mindless apologia of other Malraux biog-

raphers with passages such as, “Malraux manages to convince those he needs to, and no one is surprised. He is a born writer and a born warrior. What other writer could be so persuasive?”

Contemporaries such as Koestler and Sartre and Aron were puzzled that Malraux so quickly and effortlessly hero-worshipped de Gaulle. Had he not swung inexplicably from Left to Right, and was he not betraying everything he had previously stood for? With hindsight, it is obvious that intellectual surrender to Stalin leads straight to intellectual surrender to de Gaulle—with this difference, that the latter was willing to offer Malraux the realistic prospect of power and the massive enlargement of special privilege. Duly projected into high office, Malraux was abjectly grateful, splashing the exaggerated rhetoric of History and hero-worship over de Gaulle, telling de Gaulle to his face in cabinet that he, de Gaulle, had “as planetary a vision” as President Kennedy, of all people. In cultural matters, he appears to have been a reasonably competent minister, alleviating dull routine by resorting time and again to the special privilege of having access to the likes of Mao and Nehru, and giving the usual fanciful and self-serving accounts of what they said, as one great statesman to another. Seduced as ever by power, he could hold up Mao and his struggle as “an example for all of humanity.” By then, he had become detached from all reality. “There are only two men in France, de Gaulle and me,” he confided to François Mauriac.

A number of years have passed, the Soviet Union is no more, and the treason of the clerks in the Thirties may no longer matter so much, may indeed serve only to warn against messianism, the romancing of violence, and the appeal of power. Todd’s intention was to portray someone serious whose life was his finest work of art. The evidence in his book leads to a different conclusion. In the perspective of actual history rather than myth, Malraux revealed his skill as a dealer, and that so many of the

good and the great fell for his confidence trick is richly comic—irresistibly so now that it is enshrined as an object of admiration forever under the high and echoing dome of the Pantheon, that embodiment of historic France.

Which Enlightenment?

Gertrude Himmelfarb The Roads to Modernity: The British, French, and American Enlightenments. Knopf, 284 pages, \$25

reviewed by Keith Windschuttle

Although it has already attracted a series of reverent reviews befitting a work by one of today’s most eminent practitioners of history, this book is still more important than it looks. Gertrude Himmelfarb has called her latest volume *Roads to Modernity: The British, French and American Enlightenments*. It can be read as a provocative and persuasive revision not only of the intellectual era that made the modern world, but also of the concepts that still largely determine how we think about human affairs today.

In particular, it explains the source of the fundamental division that, despite several predictions of its imminent demise, still doggedly grips Western political life: that between the left and the right. From the outset, each side had its own philosophical assumptions and its own view of the human condition. *Roads to Modernity* shows why one of these sides has generated a steady progeny of historical successes while its rival has consistently lurched from one disaster to the next.

Most historians have accepted for several years now that the Enlightenment, once popularly characterized as the Age of Reason, came in two versions, the radical and the skeptical. The former is now generally identified with France, the latter with Scotland. It has also been acknowledged that the anti-clericalism that obsessed the French *philosophes* was not

reciprocated in Britain or America. Indeed, in both these countries many Enlightenment concepts—human rights, liberty, equality, tolerance, science, progress—complemented rather than opposed church thinking.

Himmelfarb has joined this revisionist process and accelerated its pace dramatically. She argues that, central though many mid-eighteenth-century Scots were to the movement, there were also so many original English contributors that a more accurate term than Scottish would be British Enlightenment.

Moreover, unlike the French who elevated reason to the primary role in human affairs, British thinkers gave reason a secondary, instrumental role. In Britain it was virtue that trumped all other qualities. This was not personal virtue but the “social virtues”—compassion, benevolence, sympathy—which the British philosophers believed naturally, instinctively, and habitually bound people to one another. In the abstract, this difference might seem merely one of degree but, as it worked itself out in the subsequent history of the Continent and the British Isles, it was profound.

In making her case, Himmelfarb defines the British Enlightenment in terms that some might find surprising. She includes people who in the past have usually been labeled part of the Counter-Enlightenment, especially John Wesley and Edmund Burke. She assigns prominent roles to the social movements of Methodism and Evangelical philanthropy. Despite the fact that the American colonies rebelled from Britain to found a republic, Himmelfarb demonstrates how very close they were to the British Enlightenment and how distant from French republicans.

These differences have remained to this day, and over much the same issues. On the one hand, in France, the ideology of reason challenged not only religion and the church but all the institutions dependent upon them. Reason was inherently subversive. On the other hand, British moral philoso-

phy was reformist rather than radical, respectful of both the past and present, even while looking forward to a more enlightened future. It was optimistic and had no quarrel with religion, which was why, in both Britain and the United States, the church itself could become a principal source for the spread of enlightened ideas.

In Britain, the elevation of the social virtues derived from both academic philosophy and religious practice. In the eighteenth century, the professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University, Adam Smith, was more celebrated for his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) than his later thesis on the wealth of nations. He argued that sympathy and benevolence were moral virtues that sprang directly from the human condition. In being virtuous, especially towards those who could not help themselves, man rewarded himself by fulfilling his human nature.

Edmund Burke began public life as a disciple of Smith. He wrote an early pamphlet on scarcity which endorsed Smith's laissez faire approach as the best way to serve both economic activity in general and the lower orders in particular. His Counter-Enlightenment status is usually assigned for his critique of the French Revolution, but Burke was at the same time a supporter of American independence. While his own government was pursuing its military campaign in America (and, at the same time, suspending habeas corpus at home), Burke was urging it to respect the liberty of both Americans and Englishmen.

While some historians have been led by this apparent paradox to claim that at different stages of his life there were two Edmund Burkes, one liberal and the other conservative, Himmelfarb disagrees. She argues that his views were always consistent with the ideas about moral virtue that permeated the whole of the British Enlightenment. Indeed, Burke took this philosophy a step further by making the “sentiments, manners and moral opinion” of men the basis not only of social relations but also of politics.

Apart from the different philosophical status they assigned to reason and virtue, the one issue where the division between the British and Continental Enlightenments was most sharply contrasted was their attitude to the lower orders. This is a distinction that has reverberated through politics ever since. The radical heirs of the Jacobin tradition have always insisted that it is they who speak for the wretched of the earth. In eighteenth-century France they claimed to speak for the people and the general will. In the nineteenth century they said they represented the working classes against their capitalist exploiters. In our own time, they have claimed to be on the side of blacks, women, gays, indigenes, refugees, and anyone else they define as the victims of discrimination and oppression. Himmelfarb's study demonstrates what a façade these claims actually are.

The French *philosophes* thought the social classes were divided by the chasm of poverty and, more crucially, of superstition and ignorance. They despised the lower orders because they were in thrall to Christianity. The editor of the *Encyclopédie*, Denis Diderot, declared the common people had no role in the Age of Reason. "The general mass of men are not so made that they can either promote or understand this forward march of the human spirit." Indeed, "the common people are incredibly stupid," he said, and were little more than beasts: "too idiotic—bestial—too miserable, and too busy" to enlighten themselves. Voltaire agreed. The lower orders lacked the intellect required to reason and so must be left to wallow in superstition. They could be controlled and pacified only by the sanctions and strictures of religion which, Voltaire proclaimed, "must be destroyed among respectable people and left to the *canaille* large and small, for whom it was made."

In Britain and America, by contrast, the chasm between rich and poor was bridged by the moral sense and common sense the Enlightenment attributed to all individuals. Everyone, including the members of the

lower orders, had a common humanity and a common fund of moral and social obligations. It was this social ethos, Himmelfarb argues, that in the English-speaking world was the common denominator between Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, secular philosophers, religious enthusiasts, Church of England bishops, and Wesleyan preachers.

"Man is by constitution a religious animal," Edmund Burke famously wrote in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. For Burke, religion itself—religious dissent in particular—was the very basis of liberty. The Wesleyans went one step further and also made it the basis of social reform.

John Wesley's great mission was intended to be not only the spiritual salvation of the poor but also their intellectual and moral edification. There was no conflict between reason and religion. "It is a fundamental principle with us," Wesley argued, "that to renounce reason is to renounce religion, that religion and reason go hand in hand, and that all irrational religion is false religion." It was only by "religion and reason joined" that "passion and prejudice" and "wickedness and bigotry" could be overcome.

In pursuit of their mission, the Methodists produced a huge volume of literature not just on Christianity but on grammar, medicine, electricity, natural history, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Locke, and other classics. Himmelfarb observes: "The whole of this quite extraordinary publication industry, comprising books, pamphlets, and tracts on a variety of subjects and directed to different levels of literacy and interest, constituted something like an Enlightenment for the common man."

Methodists also took the initiative in the distribution of food, clothing, and money to the needy, paid visits to the sick and to prisoners in jail, and set up loan funds and work projects for the unemployed. By the end of the eighteenth century, the example of Wesleyanism had spawned an Evangelical movement within the Church of England that appealed largely to the middle and upper classes. As well as movements for

prison reform, education and poor relief, the Evangelicals led the campaign that eventually lobbied successfully for the abolition of the slave trade.

In the American colonies, the first Great Awakening, the religious revival of the 1730s and early 1740s, paralleled the Methodist revival in Britain. The contrast with France was dramatic. In seeking respite from the religious passions of the Old World, Himmelfarb writes, the Americans did not, like the French, turn against religion itself. Instead, they incorporated religion into the mores of society. They “moralized” and “socialized” religion, turning its energies into movements for voluntary association, local organization and, ultimately, the politics of liberty.

In Britain and America, those who wrote about social reform and those in government who could do something about it were either the same people or else people cooperating closely with one another. In France, however, the *philosophes* were unconstrained by practical considerations about how their ideas might be translated into reality. They were all the more free to theorize and generalize precisely because they were less free to consult and advise.

This profoundly affected the political consequences of their ideas. The *philosophes* initially decided that enlightened despotism would be their political instrument of choice. “Enlightened despotism,” Himmelfarb argues, “was an attempt to realize—to enthrone as it were—reason as embodied in the person of an enlightened monarch, a Frederick enlightened by Voltaire, a Catherine by Diderot.” The failure of these attempts subsequently produced the theory of the “general will” that legitimized the terror of the French Revolution. The people, in whose name the revolution purportedly acted, was a singular abstraction, represented by an appropriately singular and abstract general will. “In effect, the theory of the general will was a surrogate for the enlightened despot. It had the same moral and political authority as the despot

because it, too, was grounded in reason, a reason that was the source of all legitimate authority.”

Within England itself, there were supporters of the French Enlightenment whose theory and practice ended up little different to that of the *philosophes* they emulated. Himmelfarb has a chapter on British radical dissenters, much of which is devoted to the pathetic case of William Godwin, whose writings denigrated emotions and sexuality as irrational but whose personal life was a tangle of both. As in France, the English radicals devised theories about the education of children, but their only contribution to education reform involved the schooling of the middle and upper classes. Godwin’s wife, Mary Wollstonecraft, wanted girls to be educated with boys, but her thoughts were confined to those who could afford to go to boarding schools.

Meanwhile, education for the poor became an important cause for Methodism and Evangelicalism. The eighteenth-century essayists and politicians Joseph Addison and Richard Steele thought the founding of charity schools for the children of the poor were “the glory of the age,” the “greatest instance of public spirit the age has produced.” They were followed by Sunday Schools which, until the mass education movements of the nineteenth century, were the main source of instruction for the lower orders in reading, writing and arithmetic.

These education reforms reflected the same sensibility and ethos that inspired the other British philanthropic movements. They derived from the Christian principle, reaffirmed by British moral philosophy, of the natural equality of all people. In his treatise on the wealth of nations, the subject of Adam Smith’s title was not the modern nation state. He meant the people who composed the nation, especially the “lower ranks.” It was their well-being, their “wealth” that would be promoted by a progressive political economy. Smith wrote:

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the greater part of the mem-

bers are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe, and lodge the whole body of the people should have such a share of the produce of their own labor as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed, and lodged.

In Britain and America, the Enlightenment was both a theoretical and a practical expression of this outlook. Religion, moral philosophy, and their egalitarian assumptions shaped the era. They worked together for the common cause: the material as well as the “moral reformation” of the people. *Roads to Modernity* reveals more clearly than any previous book on the subject the environment in which these ideas and practices were born and how firmly they still mold the moral sense and common sense of the English-speaking world today.

Misplaced guilt

Deepak Lal In Praise of Empires: Globalization and Order.
Palgrave Macmillan, 306 pages, \$26.95

reviewed by Andrew Roberts

The Italians are rightly proud of Ancient Rome, the French revere the Napoleonic First Empire, the Portuguese esteem Prince Henry the Navigator as highly as the Austrians do Emperor Charles V, or the Spanish King Philip II. You won't find a Russian who denigrates Peter or Catherine the Great, any more than a Greek who despises the Athens of Pericles. In Uzbekistan the highest order of chivalry is the Order of Temur, named after their all-conquering hero Tamerlane, and—despite decades of official disapproval—Mongolians still toast the memory of the great Genghis Khan. Indeed, there is no country or race that is expected to feel guilty about the moment their empire occupied the limelight of History—except of course the English-speaking peoples.

For us, the fact that first the British and

then the American hegemonies have held global sway since the Industrial Revolution is regarded to be the source of profound, permanent, and self-evident guilt. Ever since the 1960s the academy, the Left-liberal intelligentsia, and the political establishments across the English-speaking worlds have been united in this central mantra: Imperialism equals Evil.

Rare is it that an academic economist writes a book that bears the reader along effortlessly, rarer still that it should be genuinely inspiring, but Deepak Lal has achieved both in this scholarly, witty, and brave work debunking such a credo. It should become—but owing to the superb title shall never be—required reading for everyone at the State Department. More realistically it ought to be given shelf space in the libraries of all who reject the idea that we should apologize for the British and American empires.

The nephew of a Nehru cabinet minister who was imprisoned by the British, Deepak Lal is a former Indian foreign service diplomat, Oxford economics don, research administrator for the World Bank, and the author of nineteen books. Professor Lal has advised governments, travelled extensively, and is now the highly respected professor of international development studies at UCLA. He began life believing in the socialist and nationalist ideologies of post-independence India, but now despises what he calls “the Dirigiste Dogma.” In short, it is impossible to imagine anyone in a better position to explode the Imperialism=Evil myth from the inside.

“It is evidence and experience,” Lal says, “especially in working and travelling in most parts of the Third World during my professional career, which have led me to change my earlier views.” In only 216 pages of tautly written, sharply worded, and frankly exhilarating text, Lal sets out the case for imperialism in the modern world, and why the United States could bring untold benefits to the planet if only it could shrug off the Revolutionary War-era notion

that empires are bad things per se. If they're done right, empires can bring the widespread and long-term peace and prosperity that the post-1648 Westphalian system of constantly competing nation states has been historically incapable of delivering.

Seeing a group campaigning under the banner "Vegan Dykes Against the WTO" in Seattle in November 1999 set Lal thinking about globalization, just as decades earlier during the Vietnam War he had been set thinking about imperialism by the sight of a black U.S. captain reciting Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden" in Delhi. The product of the fusion of these two concepts—globalization and imperialism—is a book that ought radically to alter the popular (presently negative) view of both. "The order provided by empires," Lal argues, "has been essential for the working of the benign processes of globalization, which promote prosperity."

This splendidly bald and wonderfully revisionist statement is supported by a wealth of evidence and acutely chosen statistical tables, backed up by an impressive range of sources from fellow intellectuals. Drawing on the thought of Raymond Aron, Hedley Bull, Niall Ferguson, Michael Oakeshott, and many others, Lal nonetheless constructs his own analysis of where we've been, where we're headed, and what might happen if we choose not to go there. This book is a signpost saying "Stop! Think!" and as such it does for American geopolitics what Charles Murray's *Human Accomplishment* did for Western self-respect and Allan Bloom's *Closing of the American Mind* tried to do for higher education.

Lal defines his terms carefully: "Globalization is the process of creating a common economic space which leads to a growing integration of the world economy through increasingly free movement of goods, capital, and labour," something that he believes is almost always "a positive sum game." America can choose to go down the route of free trade and laissez-faire, thereby enriching the world as well as itself, or it can

stick with the New Deal-era populist anti-trust legislation and trade reciprocity that Lal believes impoverishes both the world and the United States.

"Not since the fall of the Roman Empire has there been a potential imperial power like the U.S. today," Lal states, and the role that has been thrust upon her by History, one that she must not now shirk, is to create what he calls a "LIEO," a Liberal International Economic Order. The major attributes of the nineteenth-century British-imposed LIEO were free trade, free mobility of capital, sound money due to the gold standard, property rights guaranteed by law, piracy-free transportation thanks to the Royal Navy, political stability, low domestic taxation and spending, and "gentlemanly" capitalism run from the City of London. "Despite Marxist and nationalist cant," he writes, the British empire delivered astonishing growth rates, at least to those places fortunate enough to be colored pink on the globe.

This first LIEO was the first truly global economic system, and was immeasurably aided by the plunging costs resulting from the inventions of railways, telegraphy, and steam engines. Yet it faltered after the Great War when Britain became unable, and the U.S. was unwilling, to continue to impose it. The great villains of this book are the (now largely unknown) British Prime Minister Andrew Bonar Law, who declared in 1922 that Britain could no longer be the world's policeman, and President Woodrow Wilson whose "utopian world view was a strange mixture of classical liberalism, Burkean conservatism, Presbyterianism, and socialism." Lal also blames Wilson's vandalism of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires in 1919 for creating the circumstances that allowed the rise of Hitler.

"If the Americans had [in the 1870s] joined the British in creating an Anglo-American imperium to maintain the Pax," postulates Lal in a fascinating historical counterfactual,

the terrible events of the last century could perhaps have been avoided. The joint in-

dustrial and military might of an Anglo-American imperium run, let us say, by the equivalent of a Lord Palmerston, could have prevented the Kaiser's gamble to achieve mastery in Europe, and one of the most pointless wars—the First World War—could perhaps have been avoided.

For all that, Lal accepts the Hobbesian view that “fighting and violence are endemic to human nature,” and his subsequent potted history of imperialism over the past two millennia is as cogent as it is persuasive. In the ancient empires of the Tigris and Euphrates it was largely threats from outside—from the nomads of the northern steppes and southern deserts—that forced communities to coalesce into empires. Lal is at pains to emphasize the essentially *defensive* nature of many empires, although of course not those of the Nazi and Marxist-Leninist totalitarian states of the twentieth century. In those, Mankind was forced down two cul de sacs which both led only to abattoirs, and from which it did not fully emerge for seventy-two years after 1917.

Once Pax Britannica ruled the seas and Pax Americana controlled the skies, outside threats were containable, yet still they came—from the Kaiser, the Nazis, Soviet Communism, and now from Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Lal argues convincingly that the envy and hatred of what Kipling called the “lesser breeds without [i.e., outside] the law” is simply the inevitable concomitant of greatness. America should ignore these and concentrate on winning the historical applause of Mankind (a politically incorrect word of which he pleasingly defends the use, incidentally).

What cannot protect the English-speaking peoples is what Lal describes as “mythical international civil society,” least of all a strengthened United Nations. The United Nations after 1945 has made every error that the League of Nations did before 1939. “Once again,” as Lal perceptively puts it, “the anthropomorphic identification of states as persons, and the presumption of an essential

harmony of interests between these equal world citizens was proclaimed, with those breaking international norms being brought into line through collective economic sanctions.” His contempt for these as effective instruments of policy is unbounded.

“With the demeaning behavior demanded of the United Nations to try to get the Iraq resolution through in early 2003 by trying to outbid the French to get the vote of Cameroon on the UN Security Council,” states Lal, “no self-respecting power and certainly not one as powerful as the United States should, or is likely to, put up with this remnant of the old international order.” How many Americans and yankophile non-Americans will cheer that splendid statement, as well as his conclusion that “there is a case for closing down many of the multilateral institutions that were created to manage a very different world at a time when the United States was unwilling openly to embrace the burden of empire.”

Empires promote modernity, Lal argues, yet in the American academy they are persistently seen as outmoded, by professors whose own outdated studies have left them in thrall to the anarchical post-Westphalian international system of competing nation states. Lal's own exposition of Realpolitik is so eye-wateringly unapologetic that at times he makes Henry Kissinger look like a moralizing liberal.

Of course in such a wide-ranging book covering such profound issues, occasionally some generalizations and misconceptions must creep in. This (British) reviewer took exception to Lal's claim that “nationalist revolts” destroyed the British empire in India, whereas in fact it was the Labour party's ideological and finance-driven decision in London, rather than any problem with civil disobedience in India, that led them to quit the sub-continent in 1947. This quibble apart, Lal's analyses are otherwise as factually correct as they are refreshingly politically incorrect.

What can America now do to promote the imperial role that, largely unsought, has been thrust upon her by destiny? One use-

ful long-term aim, which will contravene over half a century of devout State Department practice, would be to foil, or at least retard, the drive for the European Union to become a competing superstate. As Lal rightly points out: "It must be in the interest of the United States to see that a politically united Europe does not emerge . . . [but] . . . to see Europe remain a congeries of independent states, happy, as in the past, to be free riders in the world order maintained by the U.S. imperium." Here is real, rare, and remarkable wisdom, which the State Department is busily ignoring.

To invert Dean Acheson's famous quip about post-Suez Britain, America has found an empire but has yet to find a role. Republicans and Democrats both shun the term "empire" as profoundly un-American, despite it representing a far higher historic calling than the merely nation-based one of 1776. Lal rejects the neoconservative project of extending democracy throughout the globe, arguing that experience shows that in places like Iran and Algeria it will be used to promote Islamic nihilism and obscurantism. For him modernity is the touchstone, and the perfect way for America both to defeat al Qaeda and to earn the enduring salute of History. Imperialism is thus an idea whose time has come again.

Gangreene

Norman Sherry

The Life of Graham Greene,
Volume Three: 1955–1991.
Viking, 906 pages, \$39.95

reviewed by Jeffrey Meyers

Graham Greene, as Eliot wrote of Baudelaire, had "a true form of *acedia*, arising from the unsuccessful struggle towards the spiritual life." Damnation, for him, was "an immediate form of salvation" from the ennui of modern existence. Like Baudelaire, "he could not escape suffering and could not transcend it, so he attracted pain to himself."

Greene frequented opium dens in Indochina and whorehouses around the world. His life was punctuated by suicide attempts, multiple mistresses, and emotional crises. His art was the poetry of departure, the fiction of flight, the search for hell. He preferred to be wretched rather than contented, a Catholic without God. He did not seek religion for consolation but for guilt, which twisted through him like a dagger. Sinning intensified his misery and fired his imagination.

Greene's women were both the sin and the hell that punishes it, and fear of damnation heightened the sexual thrill. Preferring tormented love to emotional fulfillment, he protracted his affair with Catherine Walston (a major part of this book) to continue the pain they caused each other. He tried to entice her out of England with trips to "Brazilia or Tahiti or Capri or anywhere," and lied to her about his loneliness and celibacy: "one may prefer to be alone if one can't be with the person one loves."

Norman Sherry evades the fascinating aspects of Greene's life and concentrates on the trivial. He remarks that "Catherine was special," and that Greene was deeply troubled when the husband of his last mistress, the rather commonplace Yvonne Cloetta, interfered with his sexual needs. Sherry never explains why Catherine wound up as an alcoholic—was it marital guilt, the break with Greene, or sleeping with her household priests?—or how Yvonne's husband finally discovered, after thirteen years, that Greene was his wife's lover. Sherry asks some teasing questions—but doesn't answer them. Who was the son of Rupert Brooke that Greene found in Tahiti? What transpired at Greene's dinner with the illustrious Mary McCarthy, Kenneth Clark, and Anthony Powell? How exactly was Liz Taylor "hell" during the filming of *The Comedians*? What did Greene mean when he confessed that "I've betrayed very many people in my life"? Why did a friend say that his eyes had "mysterious little twists of malice"?

Greene could be obtuse, not only about women, but also about money and politics. He was—like Conrad, Hemingway, and Or-

well—cheated, even wiped out, by the thief who managed his finances. Courted by dictators, he was blind to the Communist atrocities in Vietnam, Cuba, and Nicaragua. He defended the spy and traitor Kim Philby and notoriously declared: “If I had to choose between life in the Soviet Union and life in the United States, I would certainly choose the Soviet Union”—an idea best contemplated from Antibes. Philby (the model for Maurice Castle in *The Human Factor*) lived in both countries and was a lot happier as a mole in Washington than pensioned off in Moscow.

Greene adopted Lawrence’s motto—“When in doubt, move”—and became a perpetual traveler. Lawrence moved from place to place in search of good health; Maugham restlessly sought new material; Greene took agonizing trips to escape boredom, to suffer, to see the worst things everywhere. In 1959, he went to a Congolese leprosarium, observed the patients without fingers or toes, and became “quite accustomed to the sweet gangrenous smell of certain leprous skins.” In 1964, I visited a leprosarium in Jinja, Uganda, and found that the lepers receiving medical treatment were much better off than the disfigured beggars on the streets of Kampala. Greene exaggerates the horrors in *A Burnt-Out Case*.

His typically sinful characters—the seedy expatriate, the anguished priest, the corrupt cop, all psychologically maimed—inhabit a decayed, forlorn landscape. Greene himself, who could never resist a fight, was physically and mentally damaged by his battles late in life: his conflict with the gangsters of Nice, recounted in *J’Accuse*; his rejection by the perennially misguided Nobel prize committee because he was too left-wing or too pessimistic or too unpopular with the most influential Swede; his defense of Communist dictatorships; his public quarrel with Anthony Burgess (when Burgess makes a valid criticism, Sherry merely remarks: “What a cad Burgess could be”); and his heated dispute with the judges of an Irish literary award.

Since the front-page reviewer in the *New*

York Times Book Review called the book “incomparable . . . invaluable . . . masterly . . . fascinating,” it’s worth examining this example of the biographer’s art to see if it merits this high praise. Sherry managed to transform Greene’s adventurous life into a boring one. He dedicates the book to a small crowd of ten people (there ought to be a limit) and has eight pages of sycophantic acknowledgments, in which everyone, including his hairdresser and janitor, is wonderful, marvelous, and brilliant. The first chapter describes the reaction to Greene’s death, not throughout the world, but in phone calls from newspapers to Sherry. All this is duly repeated in the penultimate chapter. He twice mentions his London club, prints some of his own little poems, and includes a photo of himself riding on an ass.

His style, as Stevenson said of Walt Whitman, is so careless that it seems “he had not taken the trouble to write prose.” He frequently states the obvious: that Greene, being unable to divine the future, “could not know . . .” The book is tediously repetitive, with whole paragraphs reprinted verbatim; filled with clichés; sloppy and sometimes unintelligible; bombastic and bathetic. He assures us that “I was, we all are, a close witness to death’s perpetual annihilation of the womb-born.”

When a biographer has to pay for each word he quotes, he uses them carefully. As Greene’s authorized biographer, Sherry could quote for free, and stuffs half his text with a few thousand direct quotations, feebly linked with words like “And to Peter Smith. . . . And the follow-up. . . . But here’s the rub. . . . The next communication is a postcard from Vienna.” Sherry admits that Greene was a dull and repetitious correspondent and “stresses for the umpteenth time that he is still thoroughly in love with Catherine,” but he quotes hundreds of these letters. When Greene sees Stevenson’s home in Samoa, he tells Catherine, like any commonplace tourist: “I visited Valima [sic] . . . very beautiful & a famous waterfall.” Yet Sherry, who says Greene must have sounded

to her like a “broken record” or a “sick moose,” absurdly claims that Greene wrote “some of the most passionate love letters in the language.” Awash in letters and diaries, Sherry falls into the trap of trying to account for almost every day in Greene’s life. There’s no thematic connection between chapters, no clear structure, no dramatic narrative and—with sudden and confusing shifts backward and forward in time—no clear chronology.

Sherry adds hundreds of notes at the bottom of the page that he couldn’t squeeze into the long-winded text, and some contain the worst of his many errors. Conrad’s *Victory* takes place in Surabaya, Java—not in Bangkok—and Conrad never refused a knighthood. Hemingway did not kill himself because “he’d destroyed his enormous talent by drinking.” Maugham did not leave a trail of unpaid hotel bills. Sherry, who followed Greene’s path throughout the world, has a very shaky grasp of geography. He thinks Broadway and New York are in different places; that the Rocky Mountains start in Montreal; that Lerici is near Milan. And Liz Taylor surely bought her jewels in Bulgaria—not in Bulgaria! The editing of this book is disgraceful.

Sherry does a good job of describing the political situation when Greene, following his almost infallible instinct, turns up in Cuba, the Congo, and Panama just as they are about to explode, but he slides once again into banality, noting that in Haiti “Duvalier’s reign was one man’s long night of cruelty.” Sherry, having lost his way, cannot distinguish between what is and is not important or interesting. He belabors a minor incident, worth a paragraph, for ten pages and devotes eighteen pages to Greene’s play, *Carving a Statue*, a minor failure. He traveled all the way to Corrientes, Argentina, to interview an Englishman and dutifully records his contribution: “I met Greene once. We shook hands. That’s all.”

When discussing crucial theological issues, Sherry can be both shallow and misleading. He claims that “Graham’s early unhappiness at Berkhamsted [School] ul-

timately provides his source for a belief in hell.” Schoolboy cruelty, though nasty, does not inspire the fear of eternal damnation. He twice calls Greene manic-depressive, though Greene was not manic. Unlike Robert Lowell, he was always in control of himself and never became violent and dangerous. Sherry says that biography “is characterized by revelation,” but reveals precious little, apart from Greene’s sordid sexual adventures, that is new.

I’d rate Greene, among his close contemporaries (all born between 1903 and 1905), as inferior to Waugh but better as a novelist than Orwell, Isherwood, Powell, Koestler, and C. P. Snow. His film criticism is superb, his African travel books evocative, his reportage on Kenya, Indochina, and Malaya incisive, his life of the Earl of Rochester fascinating, his autobiographies evasive but intriguing. His Catholic trilogy—*The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, and *The End of the Affair*—has impressive political as well as theological content. *The Third Man*, both as novel and film, is perfect. *Our Man in Havana* is a witty send-up of the spy game. *The Human Factor*, set in South Africa, is his most prescient late novel.

Sherry assumes Greene’s greatness as a writer and does not attempt to evaluate his achievement. He’s much more interested in finding the real-life sources of Greene’s fictional characters than in discussing the meaning of the novels. He offers pointless parallels: “just as on the fictional *Medea* [in *The Comedians*], there was also a party on the ship bound for Freetown,” or meaningless models: “Greene’s man in Havana, Wormold, was inspired by two wartime agents: Paul Fidrmuc . . . and Juan Pujol García,” which tells us nothing about Greene’s creative imagination. Sherry’s literary judgments are meaningless or absurd. He says that Greene admired Ford Madox Ford for “his sheer involvement in his themes,” instead of showing how Ford influenced Greene’s fiction, and that “the first hundred pages of [*The Heart of the Matter*] were the best hundred pages I had

read in my lifetime" (when else could he have read them?).

When a writer spends half a lifetime on a biography, he usually (as Lawrance Thompson did with Frost and Carlos Baker did with Hemingway) comes to hate his subject. Though Sherry, to his credit, still idolizes Greene, he also resents the fact that his own life has been devoured by his subject. He started it nearly thirty years ago, had a fifteen-year gap between the first and third volumes (losing most readers along the way), and has finally completed the bloated monster of 2,251 pages, weighing eight pounds and costing \$105 for the set. (At least Sherry has finished the thing. The scholarly bibliography of Greene, announced in the Oxford University Press catalogue in 1990, has been abandoned.) Sherry compensates for his surrender to Greene by egotistically inserting himself into the biography. (Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* and Edmund Morris's *Reagan* had the same fault.) Greene may well have told the obsessive Sherry what Johnson told Boswell: "You have but two topicks, yourself and me. I am thoroughly sick of both."

Serious imagination

Robert Grant

Imagining the Real: Essays on Politics, Ideology and Literature.
Palgrave Macmillan, 248 pages, \$90

reviewed by Noel Malcolm

The retreat of academic literary criticism from the public realm is one of the sadder phenomena of recent cultural history. In university bookshops the Eng. Lit. shelves are groaning with volumes catchily entitled "The Transgressive Body . . .," "Engendering Discourse . . ." and so on; but who buys them? The practitioners of the genre, certainly; some students (the ones with starry eyes and deep pockets), perhaps; but the general public—which used to rush out to purchase the latest book by Leavis or

Empson—hardly at all. Literary biography, now the only form of serious writing about literature to be bought by general readers, is the exception that proves the rule.

If you think that this matters, then you probably also assume that a culture is impoverished when the activity of thinking seriously about literature no longer forms part of it. In which case, you may also suppose (though it doesn't necessarily follow) that literature enables us to understand more deeply the values by which we live. Many great critics—Arnold and Leavis, to name two—have held such assumptions, and have contributed to a tradition in which literary criticism and moral thinking have been connected, not factitiously (as with the yoking of old texts to new ideological campaigns) but intimately. That tradition, once so central, has weakened to such an extent that anyone who represented it today might seem positively eccentric.

Enter Robert Grant, Professor of the History of Ideas in the English Department at Glasgow University: a critic who for many years has been ploughing a lonely furrow in what used to be this central and fertile field. *Imagining the Real* is the second in a projected trilogy of collected pieces; the first, *The Politics of Sex and Other Essays*, appeared four years ago. The new volume, like the previous one, covers a wide range of topics (from honesty to Derrida, from *The Tempest* to game theory), but with a consistent purpose: to explore the ways in which culture is the bearer and guarantor of human values, and to expose the errors of those who think otherwise.

Of the latter, there are many, and not only among literary or cultural critics. One essay is a courteous but devastating critique of a Swedish Communist who argued, just as the Soviet system was collapsing, that true "conservatism" should require it to be maintained. Grant deftly shows the inadequacy of an approach to life so formalistic that it thinks only in terms of quantifiable goods, power-relations, or degrees of change. He insists that things, people, and ways of life can all be objects of love, and "because love

admits of no substitutes, a thing or person loved lies on no conceivable indifference curve, and therefore falls outside the scope of economic or quasi-economic calculation."

Dealing with "conservative" Swedish Communists may sound like shooting endangered species in a barrel, but there is plenty of other, and larger, quarry here. For example, commenting on the much-trumpeted revival of political philosophy in the 1970s, Grant complains: "the focus of Rawls, Nozick *et al.* was so narrow as to exclude almost everything previously considered central to political thought: authority, legitimacy, power, history, culture, law and any justice other than the so-called 'social' kind." (Not for nothing is Grant one of the world's leading authorities on the life and thought of Michael Oakeshott.)

But there are sins of commission that put those sins of omission in the shade. Grant's main target in several of these essays is deconstructionism, with its abolition of the author and its reduction of literature (and culture in general) to something devoid of both reference and intention. He is, professedly, repelled by the writings of Derrida: "As Dr. Johnson said of Macpherson's *Osian*," he notes, "any man might write like that, if he would only abandon his mind to it." Nevertheless, having forced himself to read a large part of the *oeuvre*, he has produced a marvellously clear—and, all things considered, brief—analysis of both the theoretical weaknesses of Derrida's position and its psychological appeal. Reading this, one feels rather like a yachtsman who, having been marooned for weeks in the middle of the Sargasso Sea, is unexpectedly given a tow by a passing nuclear ice-breaker.

Shorter notices

Carl Rollyson Reading Biography.
IUniverse, 105 pages, \$12.95

Carl Rollyson reads biographies. He writes biographies. He writes about reading biographies. He writes about writing biogra-

phies. Writers are the subject of many of the biographies he reads and writes. *Whew!* Add up this reading and writing and you arrive at a sum of literary arithmetic called "On Biography," Rollyson's regular column for *The New York Sun*. Part book review, part essay, always timely and interesting, "On Biography" covers biography's subjects and the subject of biography in a two-for-one deal. *Reading Biography* is Rollyson's first collection of these essays, which he began writing in Spring 2003.

Emerson wrote that "There is properly no history; only biography." Disraeli: "Read no history; nothing but biography, for that is life without theory." Carlyle: "History is the essence of innumerable biographies." Rollyson knew he was onto something when he took up the subject of biography. But why biography now? "Historians distrust biography," Rollyson writes in a review of two books on Stalin. "Modern historiography has rejected Thomas Carlyle's 'Great Man' theory of history in favor of complex explorations of historical process, of the forces and factors that shape the world regardless of its individual players." True enough, but social history doesn't exactly lend itself to page-turner reading, and increasingly it is biographers who have taken up the slack of writing accessible history. Rollyson settles on a quote from Louis Fischer to best describe his interest: "Biography is history seen through the prism of a person."

As a biographer himself, Rollyson has more than a few ideas about its mechanics. He writes of Michael Barber's *Anthony Powell: A Life*, for example:

I like the feel of Mr. Barber's book, and the sense that he is aware of how to manage his own narrative. Thus he writes: "This is probably the place to summarise Powell's athletic record at Eton." Rarely does he succumb to the bane of biography, the "must have been" and the "reasonable to suppose," which are no more than oblique confessions of ignorance.

With more than a concern for tricks of the trade, Rollyson clues us into becoming—if not better writers—better readers of biography. *Reading Biography* has a production value that can best be described as “cut-and-paste.” The upside is that it contains reviews that are still quite timely—covering many of the same books reviewed recently in these pages.

—James Panero

Kate Coleman

The Secrets Wars of Judi Bari.

Encounter, 261 pages, \$25.95

Who was Judi Bari? Ask a certain not-quite-endangered species of North Coast Californian and you’ll get pure hagiography: She was Mother and Protector of the Redwoods, a champion of the radical Earth First! group, martyred (nearly) by the FBI (she claimed) in the mysterious 1990 pipe bombing that destroyed her Subaru. And if you ask Kate Coleman? As Darryl Cherney, one of Bari’s former lovers, recently put it in the *Times*: “Today there are few progressive heroes left. But even the ones who have died must be killed again by literary assassins like Kate Coleman.”

Or not. Coleman, whose Vast Right Wing Conspiracy-character-assassin credentials include residing in Berkeley and contributing to *Mother Jones*, has written an account of Bari’s life so agenda-free that it borders on dull—hard as it may be to believe that Bari, a fiddler, karate enthusiast,

and former employee of “California Yurts,” *could* be made dull. So why have Coleman’s readings been protested or canceled? It is through no fault of hers that *Secret Wars* fails to flatter Bari’s memory: the facts don’t, either.

It is unsurprising that a woman, intoxicated by the grandeur of nature, would want to spend her life defending it. But why should she one day feel an overwhelming passion for the Worker (no loggers!), the next day for Central American “anti-imperialists,” another day for abortionists, another day for old-growth Redwood forests? That’s an awful lot of passion, even for a Californian.

Bari loved agitation for its own sake, the cause itself being incidental. Even her choice of men suggests this; it turns out, Dr. Kissinger, that *activism* is the greatest aphrodisiac. Coleman may never be this reductive—her journalistic style only hints at anything like a judgment—but one wishes she were. Bari’s career is of interest mainly to specialists, but her overgrown self-importance begs to be slashed, burned, and milled into top-grade comedy. For Bari, sawing a slab of Redwood (to build a yurt, no less) was “apocalyptic.” Being tear-gassed was “profound.” During her brief career as a postal worker, she was disgruntled. She wrote folk songs. Not even a capable and decorous biographer can rescue her from self-caricature. Let us save our open minds for someone else.

—Stefan Beck

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion*:

Poetry: a special section in April

essays by Peter Campion, Paul Dean, Daniel Mark Epstein,

Adam Kirsch, David Yezzi & others

The determination of free will by Gary Saul Morson

Bardolatry made easy by John Simon

Pundits & panjandrum

by *Anthony Daniels*

One of the temptations of world fame (I suppose), especially when it is gained early in life, must be to treat one's own utterances with undue reverence. Their provenance becomes the guarantee not only of their truth but also of their profundity, and even the most casual meanderings or off-scourings of the mind, once expressed in public, are invested with ineffable preciousness.

Since I consort but rarely with the world-famous, this is something that I discovered comparatively late in life. I happened to be in Buenos Aires when Elie Wiesel was there. He was to give a public address, followed by questions and answers. I attended along with a large and expectant audience. A man who had survived the Holocaust would surely have something worthwhile to say about the wellsprings of human evil and the purpose of life, two subjects that could scarcely be more important or interesting. It didn't occur to me that one can't go humping profundity about the world as if it were a piece of luggage. Neither, apparently, did Elie Wiesel.

Buenos Aires is, of course, a city with one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. The audience was therefore unlikely to be uninformed about the Holocaust, but Wiesel spoke to it, impromptu, as if it were composed of twelve year olds of limited knowledge and less ability. Perhaps he had come to the conclusion that the world, having taken him at his own estimate, was composed exclusively of fools. He was

oblivious to the restlessness of the audience that he treated in this fashion, and when at the end of his rambling discourse he was asked what he considered to be specifically Jewish characteristics, he thought for a moment, or rather made as if he thought for a moment (after all, it was not a straightforward question), and said something like, "Jews sing and dance."

Did he mean that all Jews sing and dance? Or that only Jews sing and dance? Or both, perhaps? Just as I once drank whisky to great excess at the age of nineteen, and have never been able to drink it since without a rising feeling of nausea, so I have never been able to listen to a world-famous person without a prejudice against him since I listened to Elie Wiesel. I concede that this is not entirely logical, but neither is my aversion to whisky.

I tried again in Calcutta to cure myself of my prejudice against world-famous panjandrum. This time it was Günter Grass, another Nobel Prize winner, though for literature rather than peace. He was in a panel discussion on "The Segregation of Cultures in the Contemporary World: Clash, Convergence or Co-operation?" For some reason, the very subject matter conjured up images of hot-air balloons in my mind, of which I was not able entirely to disembarass myself.

The audience was composed of Calcutta's concerned intellectuals: concerned, that is, with where they were to have dinner after-

wards. Some of them had come with the clear intention of asking a question in public, which is to say, of making a speech. The real star of the show was the moderator, a writer and actor called Girish Karnad, who refused to allow them to do so, interrupting them not in mid-sentence but in mid-word, when it became obvious that they were more interested in airing their opinions than in asking a question on the subject—diffuse enough as it was. Rarely have I heard a more intellectually incisive chairman, simultaneously ruthless, witty, and charming. He disallowed at least half of those who spoke from the floor, but amateur windbags are not to be deterred by the prospect of humiliation, any more than professional ones are by the prospect of error.

Among the other panelists was Amitav Ghosh, billed as “the most important Indian author in English,” and Najam Sethi, a Pakistani journalist from Lahore. Ghosh spoke of an Anglophone conspiracy to dominate the world, physically, economically, and culturally, dating back at least three centuries: I half-expected him to refer to the Protocols of the Elders of Oxford. He saw the European Union—the apparatchiks’ new paradise—as the hope of the world, the one possible counterweight to the hegemony of the United States. Needless to say, as a holder of such views he lives part of his time in the United States, where there is a strong market for them, at least on university campuses, which is what counts for writers.

For Sethi I conceived a great respect. It was not that I agreed with everything he said, much to the contrary; he illustrated his belief in the possibility of genuine multiculturalism by reference to the different kinds of restaurant to be found in most large cities nowadays. (I have always suspected that, at root, multiculturalism means, at least for westerners, tapas today, tom kha kai tomorrow, and tarte tatin the day after. This is to take the idea that we are what we eat a little too seriously.) But when Sethi compared his own country, Pakistan, unfavorably with India in the matter of intellectual freedom,

it was impossible not to admire his deep moral courage. By saying such a thing in a public forum, however obvious its truth, deep in the enemy country, he was taking a personal risk of the kind that Günter Grass—or any of us—has thankfully never had to take. Of course, our freedom makes any dishonesty on our part all the more reprehensible.

Grass ambled, bear-like, onto the stage, which had been arranged like the set of a comfortable living room in a well-made play, complete with sofas and bookshelves. His manner was attractively fragile, ordinary and modest, and I warm to a man who dyes his hair at the age of seventy-eight. He still cares what figure he cuts in the world, which is an all-too-human failing.

I can’t say I’m an admirer of his prose, though: his kind of picaresque exaggeration is an open invitation to self-indulgence and imprecision. Improbability is made to stand for essence. And nothing Mr. Grass said in Calcutta rose very high above the level of cliché. The picaresque and the utterly conventional, it seems, can coexist comfortably in the same mind.

He spoke of the dangers of globalization and “economic flattening,” and of the common people as the victims of this process. He spoke of the need to resist the unique power in the world—the United States. He recalled the happy days of Willy Brandt’s famous commission on the Third World, with its prophecy that the conflict between the capitalist West and the Communist East would be replaced by that between the rich north and the poor south. And he asked what literature could do in the current circumstances. It could draw attention to issues such as global warming, the shortage of water, and the reasons for terrorism (needless to say, he wasn’t thinking here of Dostoyevsky). Indeed, he said, writers would be superfluous if they didn’t address such issues. And writers were always on the side of the losers.

Always and everywhere? On the side of the Nazis, for example? And is a writer who is not interested in hydrology *ipso facto* su-

perfluous? This is not to say that an imaginative writer could never legitimately treat of a poor person's struggle to secure a water supply in conditions of shortage, but surely it is going a little far (indeed, it is profoundly totalitarian) to say that he must do so, or risk superfluity, like members of the Russian intelligentsia in the 1840s. The indiscipline of Grass's prose is symptomatic of the indiscipline of his mind.

Grass has a special relationship with Calcutta. This was his fourth visit and he lived there for a few months in 1987 and 1988, writing a book (containing many of his pen and ink sketches) about his experiences, published in English as *Show Your Tongue*. The various predictions he made in that book have done nothing whatever to reduce the certainty of his current opinions and prognoses. This is the hallmark of the true panjandrum.

In a paragraph alluding to Subhas Chandra Bose, the Bengali Indian nationalist who broke with Gandhi and threw in his lot first with Hitler and then the Japanese, and to the fact that Bengal, like Germany, was divided between East and West, Grass says:

A little later, during a brief trip to Bangladesh, the mere mention of the Bengali Führer will unleash almost fanatical hymns of allegiance. What a good thing that at present there is no unifier (living or dead) standing at the German door.

This was published in 1989. The timing could hardly have been worse. Whatever one's temptation to laugh, one cannot blame Grass for failing to foresee what others likewise failed to foresee, but it might with decency have instilled in him a certain modesty concerning his powers of political analysis and clairvoyance.

Many of his other judgments seem hardly any better. He tells us that all the statistics concerning India in general and Calcutta in particular point to a catastrophe or even an apocalypse (one senses that he derives an illicit pleasure from this, as highly moral and respectable masochists derive pleasure from

being whipped or beaten by a dominatrix). According to Grass, the city could only get poorer and poorer and poorer until—presumably—everyone starved to death.

I have been visiting Calcutta for nearly thirty years. The reverse is actually the truth. When I first came to Calcutta, lepers waved their shrivelled and deformed limbs in your face through open taxi windows every time the taxis stopped at intersections. Paying them to go away was no solution, for it merely encouraged the others. You learned to trip over human forms on the sidewalks without inquiring too closely whether the forms were alive or dead. At night, every doorway, every nook and cranny became a dormitory, and the municipality arranged for the dead, of whom the dawn always revealed a few, to be swept up daily.

It is true that Calcutta still has the power to shock. One can still see people sifting through horrible rotting garbage for something of value. A taxi drew up beside mine and inside I saw something that brought back the memory of a previous epoch, that I thought I had forgotten, and the swiftness of whose recognition surprised me: a face deeply pitted by smallpox.

But the last case of smallpox in Calcutta was in 1972, and the man whom I saw whose face was pitted by it was well into his thirties. For those who have visited Calcutta over a period of years, the signs of increasing prosperity are everywhere: far fewer rickshaws, for example, and practically no beggars. All the children who play cricket (about which Indians are fanatical), even in the most restricted of spaces, now have real bats and balls instead of equipment fashioned out of scraps of wood and cloth, as they did formerly. I should guess that India is by far the largest market for cricket bats in the world.

Grass predicted that the old and gracious buildings of Calcutta would disappear and yield to hovels as the city grew ever poorer, ever more desperate. (He also seemed to think this was a good thing, because hovels were authentic. "Once back in Germany," he

wrote, “[I] measure everything, myself included, by Calcutta.”)

Well, he was right about the disappearance of the gracious buildings, but quite wrong about the reasons for it. Next to the place I stayed in Calcutta was a wonderful old Indo-Palladian villa, literally falling into ruins before one’s eyes. To enter it was to risk death by stucco. There was one protected tenant still living in it—I could watch her at night through the dilapidated shutters moving about in the crumbling interior—but the owner wanted the building to collapse utterly so that he could avoid the city’s preservation regulations without having to pay too great a bribe to the regulators, and build a block of luxury apartments on the site instead. He would make a fortune, even if it meant the city became even uglier. Increasing wealth, not poverty, now threatens to destroy the city’s architectural heritage, a process that was started by demagogic pseudo-egalitarian regulation.

Of course, there is no gain without loss. You don’t have to be an inveterate anti-globalist to have reservations, mainly of an aesthetic nature, about India’s headlong rush into modernity. Calcutta now has shopping malls, and its middle class can’t wait to consume western gewgaws (usually manufactured by the cheap labor of the East) that are grossly inferior, aesthetically, to India’s own traditional productions. One of the great pleasures of India used to be its comparative immunity to the cultural hegemony—to coin a phrase—of Anglo-American pop music, but not only does its own popular music increasingly approximate that horrible and savage noise, but its shopping malls positively throb with it. Sensitive Indians themselves are alarmed by the process, though they know that it is unstoppable and that their country’s indefinable charms—as well as its more easily defined horrors—will inevitably yield to it. It will take some time, and the old and new India will coexist for years to come. Emerging from a Calcutta shopping mall, where consumerism reigned in all its garish vulgarity, I noticed a large placard attached to

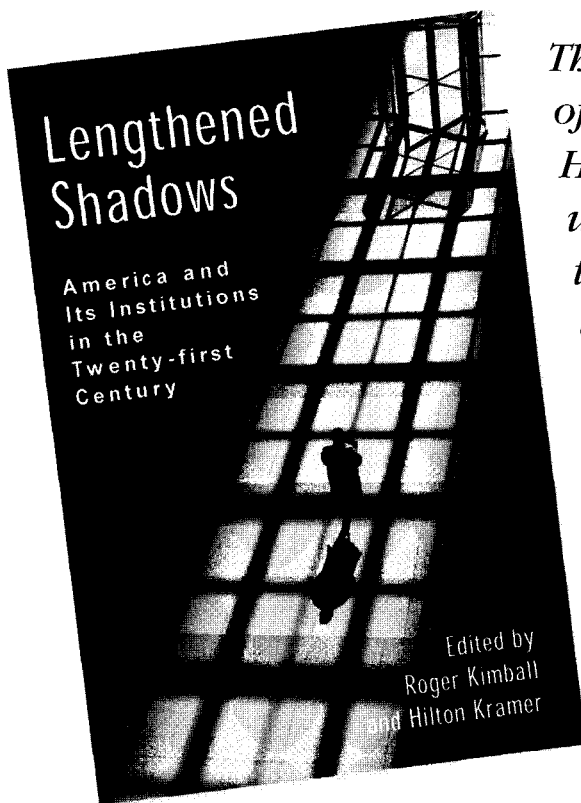
the nearest lamppost: Female foeticide is illegal. Once in India, I saw a holy cow grazing on a pile of computer printout. But there is no denying that globalization is lifting Indian cities from the most abject poverty (the countryside might be different, I don’t know), even if at the cost of a loss of aesthetic refinement.

The duty of intellectuals is to spell out proper distinctions as clearly and honestly as possible. The condition of being a pundit stands in the way of this, for it lends authority to a person rather than to evidence and argument. (Appropriately enough, “pundit” is a word of Indian origin referring to a Brahmin who knows the Sanskrit prayers that accompany the arcane rituals of Hindu *puja*, or prayer. I once asked a highly educated Indian friend of mine to explain the prayers and ritual to me at a wedding, to which he replied, “I don’t know, it’s all Greek to me.”)

The temptations of punditry are great. I have on occasion succumbed to them myself. Once the United Nations Development Program invited me, heaven knows why, to a colloquium in Bamako, Mali, on how the press might improve the image of Africa. (Improving Africa itself was, of course, quite beyond anyone’s powers, as a brief glance outside the hotel’s entrance made clear. Besides, what is reality set against the power of public relations?) Everyone at the meeting had a certain number of minutes to hold forth, and then there was a discussion afterwards. A captive audience, each member of which is awaiting his ten minutes at the podium, is an attentive audience.

I was only a minor pundit, of course. The most senior present was Nadine Gordimer, another Nobel Prize winner. After a Ghanaian woman in national costume had spoken, Miss Gordimer took the floor. “As my sister Susan has said,” she began. “Actually,” interrupted Susan, “my name’s Gloria.”

I am glad to say that so trivial a detail was not permitted to stand in the way of the important abstract point that the pundit was then trying to make.



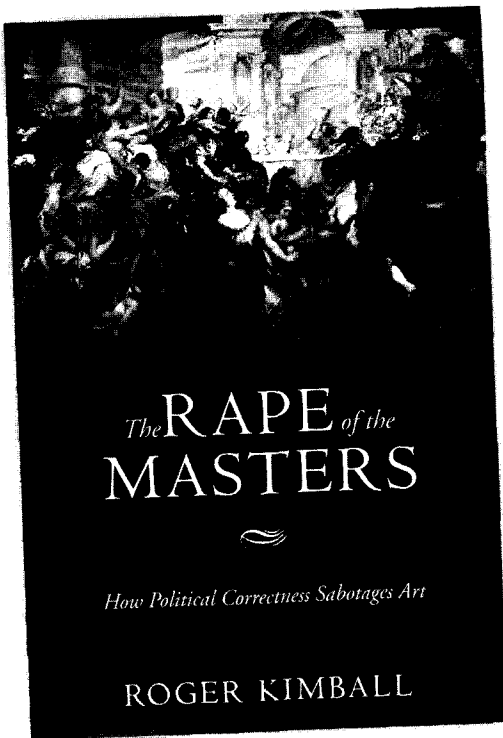
The lengthening shadow of Roger Kimball and Hilton Kramer is undeniable and so is the learning of the contributors to this volume. Their anxiety to communicate their critique is manifest; the result, brilliant and readable.

—WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY

In a series of penetrating reflections on America and its institutions in the post 9/11 world, *Lengthened Shadows* offers some answers to questions people at home and abroad have begun to ask: How did the U.S. attain its new international preeminence? What exactly is this richest, most powerful of countries made of? Where will its unmatched influence lead?

From the future of the law to the future of religion, from music to the visual arts, from the state of our military to the state of higher education, *Lengthened Shadows* provides a unique situation report on American culture and its prospects. Writers and thinkers such as Robert Bork, Frederick Kagan, David B. Hart, Roger Kimball, Hilton Kramer and Mark Steyn offer a probing assessment of the institutions that organize our lives—their health, their influence, their prospects—at the beginning of what some commentators are calling the *next* American Century.

 ENCOUNTER BOOKS www.encounterbooks.com
At bookstores everywhere or call 800-786-3839



Colleges and universities used to teach art history to encourage connoisseurship and acquaint students with the riches of our artistic heritage. But, as Roger Kimball shows in this witty and provocative book, today's students are less likely to learn about the aesthetics of master works than be told, for instance, that Peter Paul Rubens's great painting "Drunken Silenus" is an allegory about rape; or that Jan van Eyck's masterful Arnolfini Portrait is about "middle-class deceptions... and the treatment of women;" or that Winslow Homer's "The Gulf Stream" is "a visual encoding of racism."

In *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art*, Kimball, a noted art critic himself, shows how academic art history is

increasingly held hostage to radical cultural politics—feminism, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, the whole armory of academic anti-humanism. To make his point, Kimball shows how eight famous works of art—all of them reproduced in the book—have been interpreted by contemporary art historians to fit a radical ideological fantasy. Then, in his own exemplary analysis of these great works in which aesthetics, not politics, guides the discussion, Kimball shows how each of these paintings should properly be understood.

The Rape of the Masters exposes the charlatantry that fuels much academic art history and oozes into the art world generally. It also provides an engaging antidote to the tendentious, politically motivated assaults on our treasured sources of culture and civilization that take place in today's universities, museums, and art galleries.



ENCOUNTER BOOKS www.encounterbooks.com

At bookstores everywhere or call 800-786-3839

715 North Hayworth Avenue Los Angeles, California 90046 Telephone (323) 633.6168

JEFF REESE



JEFF REESE 2001

From The Series : PLATO - THE FORMS. PART I (Book 1) SOME CURRENT VIEWS OF JUSTICE

NEW YORK CITY
THE ARMORY SHOW
 THE INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF NEW ART

March 11-14, 2005

Piers 90 & 92 | Twelfth Avenue at 50th & 52nd Streets

www.thearmoryshow.com

Opening Night Preview Party to Benefit the Exhibition Program of The Museum of Modern Art, New York.
 Thursday, March 10, 2005. For Information: call 212.708.9680 or email speialevents@moma.org

AMSTERDAM | Galerie Paul Andriess | Annet Gelink Gallery | Galerie Diana Stigter | Galerie Fons Welters | ANTWERP | Zeno X Gallery
 ATHENS | The Breeders | Els Hanappe Underground | BASEL | Grieflin Maag Galerie | BERLIN | Arndt & Partner | Contemporary Fine Arts
 Galerie Crone, Andreas Osarek | Galerie EIGEN + ART | Kicken Berlin | Klosterfelde | Johann König | Galerie NEU | Galerie Giti Nourbakhsh
 Galerie Barbara Thumm | Galerie Barbara Weiss | BROOKLYN | Pierogi | Roebling Hall | CHICAGO | Rhona Hoffman Gallery | Donald Young Gallery
 COLOGNE | Galerie Christian Nagel | Galerie Aurel Scheibler | COPENHAGEN | the leisure club MOGADISHINI | Galleri Nicolai Wallner
 DALLAS | Angstrom Gallery | DRESDEN | Galerie Gabr. Lehmann | DUBLIN | Kerlin Gallery | DÜSSELDORF | Galerie Schmela
 Stes + Höke | HAMBURG | Galerie Karin Guenther Nina Borgmann | Produzentengalerie | KARLSRUHE | Meyer Riegger Galerie | LONDON
 The Approach | Sadie Coles HQ | Corvi-Mora | Stephen Friedman Gallery | Frith Street Gallery | greengrassi | Haunch of Venison
 Alison Jacques Gallery | Lisson Gallery | Victoria Miro Gallery | Stuart Shave/Modern Art | Maureen Paley | The Paragon Press | Kenny Schachter Rowe
 Timothy Taylor Gallery | Emily Tsingou Gallery | Vilma Gold | White Cube/Jay Jopling | LOS ANGELES | Black Dragon Society | Blum & Poe
 Marc Fox | Anna Helwing Gallery | Michael Kohn Gallery | David Kordansky Gallery | peres projects | Richard Telles Fine Art
 Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects | MARSEILLE | Galerie Roger Pailhas | MEXICO CITY | Galeria Enrique Guerrero | kurimanzutto | MIAMI
 Fredric Snitzer Gallery | MILAN | Galleria Raffaella Cortese | Monica De Cardenas | Galleria Massimo De Carlo | galleria francesca kaufmann
 NAPLES | Lia Rumma | NEW DELHI | Nature Morte | NEW YORK | 303 Gallery | Alexander and Bonin | Bellwether | Peter Blum Gallery; Blumarts, Inc.
 Marianne Boesky Gallery | Tanya Bonakdar Gallery | Spencer Brownstone Gallery | Christine Burgin | Cheim & Read | Cohan and Leslie
 James Cohan Gallery | John Connelly Presents | CRG Gallery | D'Amelio Terras | Deitch Projects | Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc.
 Zach Feuer Gallery (LFL) | Fredericks Freiser Gallery | Klemens Gasser & Tanja Grunert, Inc. | Sandra Gering Gallery | Gladstone Gallery
 Marian Goodman Gallery | Greenberg Van Doren Gallery | Greene Naftali | Casey Kaplan | Paul Kasmin Gallery | Sean Kelly Gallery
 Anton Kern Gallery | Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery | Leo Koenig, Inc. | Andrew Kreps Gallery | Lehmann Maupin | Galerie Lelong | maccarone inc.
 Matthew Marks Gallery | Sara Meltzer Gallery | Metro Pictures | Robert Miller Gallery | Murray Guy | Carolina Nitsch | Nolan/Eckman Gallery
 PaceWildenstein | Postmasters Gallery | The Project | Daniel Reich Gallery | Rivington Arms | Jack Shainman Gallery | Brent Sikkema
 Team Gallery | Jack Tilton Gallery | Leslie Tonkonow Artworks+Projects | Henry Urbach Architecture | David Zwirner | OSAKA | Kodama
 PARIS | Art: Concept | Galerie Chez Valentin | Yvon Lambert | Galerie Nathalie Obadia | Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin
 Galerie Praz-Delavallade | Galerie Almine Rech | Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac | Galerie Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois | ROME
 Magazzino d'Arte Moderna | SAN FRANCISCO | Jack Hanley Gallery | SAN GIMIGNANO | Galleria Continua | SANTA MONICA CA
 Angles Gallery | Richard Heller Gallery | SÃO PAULO | Galeria Fortes Vilaça | SEOUL | Kukje Gallery | SEVILLE | Galeria Pepe Cobo | STOCKHOLM
 Andrén-Schiptjenko | Brändström & Stene | Galleri Magnus Karlsson | Galleri Charlotte Lund | TEL-AVIV | Sommer Contemporary Art | TOKYO
 Taka Ishii Gallery | Tomio Koyama Gallery | Ota Fine Arts | SCAI | Gallery Side 2 | TURIN | Galleria Franco Noero | VANCOUVER
 Catriona Jeffries Gallery | VIENNA | Georg Kargl | Galerie Krinzinger | ZÜRICH | Hauser & Wirth Zürich London | Galerie Peter Kilchmann
 Mai 36 Galerie | Parkett Editions | Galerie Eva Presenhuber

Presenting Sponsor

**CLIFFORD
 CHANCE**

Art by Jockum Nordström

Courtesy of the artist, Galleri Magnus Karlsson, Stockholm, and David Zwirner, New York. Design by Stephen Kinder Design Partnership

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
 ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BRADLEY PRIZES

Congratulations to the 2005 Bradley Prize Recipients

SCOTT
WILL

*Author, Columnist;
Contributing Analyst
with ABC News;
Pulitzer Prize Winner*



JAMES
CONNERLY

*Founder and Chairman,
American Civil Rights
Institute; President
and CEO, Connerly
and Associates, Inc.*



HEATHER
MAC DONALD

*John M. Olin Fellow,
Manhattan Institute;
Contributing Editor
to City Journal*



ROBERT P.
GEORGE

*McCormick Professor
of Jurisprudence,
Princeton University;
Director, James Madison
Program in American
Ideals and Institutions*



The Bradley Prizes recognize outstanding achievements that are consistent with the Foundation's mission statement. Founded in 1985, The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation is devoted to strengthening American democratic capitalism and the institutions, principles and values that sustain and nurture it. Its programs support limited, competent government; a dynamic marketplace for economic, cultural activity; and a vigorous defense, at home and abroad, of American ideas and institutions.

www.bradleyfdn.org

HIGH PLAINS FARM



PAULA CHAMLEE

HIGH PLAINS FARM

Paula Chamlee returned home to photograph and write about the farm where she grew up on the High Plains of the Texas Panhandle, a farm where her parents, then in their late eighties, still farmed their 1,100 acres all by themselves. These emotionally charged and aesthetically powerful photographs provide an intimate look at her home place and reveals a way of life and value system that are quickly vanishing.

I know of no finer evocation of life and land on the Great Plains. Chamlee's book belongs alongside the works of Willa Cather.

— George F. Thompson, President, Center for American Places

Paula Chamlee's book is essential reading and viewing for all of us who look to our roots to comprehend the depth of life in this land called the United States. ... Her remarkable portrayal of her family's life on the High Plains is one of the genuinely significant contributions to photography and landscape study in many a year.

— Cotton Mather, Professor Emeritus of Geography at the University of Minnesota and Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, London

Paula Chamlee's photographs sweep from the inner soul to the infinite horizon, delineating the terrain of our memories, the range of our passions, and the expanse of our mortality. Her series remains simultaneously epic in its vision and intimate in its humanity.

— Roy Flukinger, Senior Curator of Photography and Film,
Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin



Photographs and Text by Paula Chamlee

Foreword by George F. Thompson

81 reproductions 11½" x 9⅝" 176 pages \$75

COLLECTOR'S SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION

A signed, numbered, custom-bound, and slipcased edition,
limited to 250 copies. \$200

Order by phone: 888-421-0388 or online: www.lodimapress.com

The New Criterion
900 Broadway
Suite 602
New York NY 10003

Periodicals Postage
Paid at New York, NY
and at additional
Mailing Offices